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# Young, Underemployed and Optimistic

Coming of Age, Slowly, in a Tough Economy

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is based on findings from a Pew Research Center survey conducted Dec. 6-19, 2011, among 2,048 adults nationwide, including 808 young adults (ages 18 to 34). The report also draws on data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Here is a summary of the key findings:

**Young adults hit hard by the recession.** A plurality of the public (41%) believes young adults, rather than middle-aged or older adults, are having the toughest time in today's economy. An analysis of government economic data suggests that this perception is correct. The recent indicators on the nation's labor market show a decline in the unemployment rate. Nonetheless, since 2010, the share of young adults ages 18 to 24 currently employed (54%) has been its lowest since the government began collecting these data in 1948. And the gap in employment between the young and all working-age adults—roughly 15 percentage points—is the widest in recorded history.<sup>1</sup> In addition, young adults employed full time have experienced a greater drop in weekly earnings (down 6%) than any other age group over the past four years.

**Public says today's young adults have it harder than their parents did.** Large majorities of the public say it's harder for young adults to reach many of the basic financial goals their parents may have taken for granted. More than eight-in-ten (82%) say finding a job is harder for young adults today than it was for their parents' generation. And at least seven-in-ten say it's harder now to save for the future (75%), pay for college (71%) or buy a home (69%).

**Tough economic times altering young adults' daily lives, long-term plans.** While negative trends in the labor market have been felt most acutely by the youngest workers, many adults in their late 20s and early 30s have also felt the impact of the weak economy. Among all 18- to 34-year-olds, fully half (49%) say they have taken a job they didn't want just to pay the bills, with 24% saying they have taken an unpaid job to gain work experience. And more than one-third (35%) say that, as a result of the poor economy, they have gone back to school. Their personal lives have also been affected: 31% have postponed either getting married or having a baby (22% say they have postponed having a baby and 20% have put off getting married). One-in-four (24%) say they have moved back in with their parents after living on their own.

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<sup>1</sup> In this case "all adults" refers to those ages 18 to 64. Those ages 65 and older are excluded due to the relatively small share in the labor force.

**Adulthood begins later than it used to.** In a 1993 Newsweek poll, 80% of parents with young children said children should be financially independent from their parents by the age of 22. Today, only 67% of parents hold that view. Three-in-ten (31%) of today's parents say children shouldn't have to be on their own financially until age 25 or later.

**For young adults, bad times don't trump optimism.** Among those ages 18 to 34, nearly nine-in-ten (88%) say they either have or earn enough money now or expect they will in the future. Only 9% say they don't think they will ever have enough to live the life they want. Adults ages 35 and older are much less optimistic—28% say they don't anticipate making enough money in the future.<sup>2</sup> While young people are less likely now than they were before the recession to say they currently have enough income, their level of optimism is undiminished from where it was in 2004.

**Older adults have maintained their standard of living.** If any age group has weathered the economic storm better than others, it has been adults ages 65 and older. In a 2004 Pew Research survey, similar shares of young adults (50%), middle-aged adults (52%) and older adults (50%) rated their personal financial situation "excellent" or "good." By 2011, a large gap had opened up between older adults and everyone else: 54% of older adults gave their personal financial situation a high rating, compared with roughly one-third of younger and middle-aged adults.

**Among the employed, job satisfaction has remained steady ...** For those young adults who are employed, most are relatively satisfied with their job. Job satisfaction among young workers is roughly the same as it was before the recession and remains somewhat lower than the satisfaction rate among workers ages 35 and older.

**... But young workers feel more vulnerable than they used to.** In a 1998 survey, 65% of 18- to 34-year-olds working full time or part time said they were extremely or very confident that they could find another job if they lost or left their current job.<sup>3</sup> The share highly confident fell dramatically to 25% in 2009. It has rebounded somewhat since then (to 43% in the current survey) but is still nowhere near the 1998 level.

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<sup>2</sup> This includes both employed and not employed adults. Employed adults were asked if they "earn enough money" or expect they will in the future; adults who are not employed were asked if they "have enough income" or expect to in the future.

<sup>3</sup> 1998 data are from a survey conducted by the Center for Survey Research and Analysis, University of Connecticut, and the Heldrich Center at Rutgers University, Aug. 5-16, 1998, among 1,001 adults in the labor force.

**Few young workers see their current job as a “career.”** Among all 18- to 34-year-olds, only 30% consider their current job a career. This compares with 52% among workers ages 35 and older. However, the survey suggests that young adults quickly begin to transition from job to career. Among the youngest workers, those ages 18 to 24, only 11% say their job is a career. Among workers ages 25 to 29, the share is three times that (34%). And among those ages 30 to 34, fully half (49%) say they view their job as a career.

**Most young workers say they don’t have the education and training to get ahead.** Among 18- to 34-year-olds who are employed, less than half (46%) say they have the education and training necessary to get ahead in their job or career. Among those who are not working, only 27% say they are adequately prepared for the kind of job they want. Having a college degree makes a big difference on this question: 69% of young college graduates who are working say they have the education and training they need to get ahead. This compares with only 39% of those who do not have a degree and are not enrolled in college.

**College enrollment rates are tied to employment declines among the young.** A greater share of young adults are enrolled in high school or college today than at any time in recorded history. This increase in enrollment is one reason that fewer young adults are on the job today, but it doesn’t account for all the job losses experienced by this age group in recent years. The Great Recession broadly reduced the employment rate of young adults regardless of whether they were in school. Among those enrolled in school, the employment rate fell from 47.6% in 2007 to 40.7% in 2011. And among those not enrolled in school, it fell from 73.2% to 65.0% over that same period.

### About the Data

**The general public survey** is based on telephone interviews conducted Dec. 6-19, 2011, with a nationally representative sample of 2,048 adults ages 18 and older living in the continental United States, including an oversample of 346 adults ages 18 to 34. A total of 769 interviews were completed with respondents contacted by landline telephone and 1,279 with those contacted on their cellular phone. Data are weighted to produce a final sample that is representative of the general population of adults in the continental United States. Survey interviews were conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International, in English and Spanish. Margin of sampling error is plus or minus 2.9 percentage points for results based on the total sample and 4.4 percentage points for adults ages 18-34 at the 95% confidence level. For more details, see Appendix 1.

**The labor market data** are based on the Current Population Survey (CPS), a monthly survey of approximately 55,000 households sponsored jointly by the U.S. Census Bureau and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The basic monthly data are one of the U.S. government’s primary sources of labor force statistics in the country; for example, the nation’s monthly unemployment rate is based on the CPS. Most of the series on employment, unemployment and labor force participation utilized the monthly data, as compiled by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The information on school enrollment and weekly earnings come from the Merged Outgoing Rotation Group (MORG) extracts of the CPS.

## CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW

A plurality of the American public believes that young adults are having the toughest time of any age group in today's economy—and a lopsided majority says it's more difficult for today's young adults than it was for their parents' generation to pay for college, find a job, buy a home or save for the future.

A new Pew Research Center survey also finds that young adults (ages 18 to 34) say that the sluggish economy has had an impact on a wide array of coming-of-age decisions about career, marriage, parenthood and schooling.

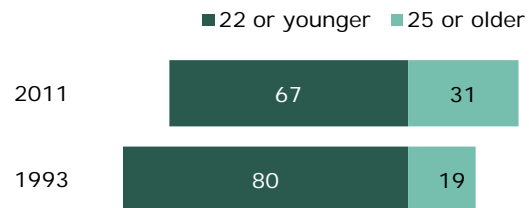
For example, nearly half (49%) say that in the past few years they have taken a job they didn't really want just to pay the bills. Smaller but still sizable shares say that because of the tough economy they have gone back to school (35%), moved back in with their parents after living on their own (24%), postponed having children (22%) or postponed getting married (20%).

These accommodations to a tough economy appear to have contributed to a broader change in social norms about when adulthood begins. The survey finds that today two-thirds (67%) of parents of children age 16 or younger say children should have to become financially independent from their parents by the age of 22—down from 80% who felt this way in 1993.<sup>4</sup>

The view that young adults are having the toughest time of any age group in today's economy is held by 41% of respondents of all ages to the telephone survey conducted Dec. 6-19, 2011, among a nationally representative sample of 2,048 adults. A smaller share—29%—say middle-aged adults are having the toughest time, while just 24% say older adults are having the worst of it.

### When Does Adulthood Begin? Later than It Used To, Parents Say

*% of parents saying children have to be financially independent by age ...*



Notes: Based on parents with children age 16 or younger. For 2011, n=577. Data for 1993 are from a poll conducted by Newsweek/PSRA April 25-May 4, 1993. "Don't know/Refused" responses not shown.

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<sup>4</sup> Data for 1993 are from a Newsweek/PSRA survey conducted Apr. 25-May 4, 1993, among 752 adult parents with children 16 or younger. In the current survey, all adults were asked the question, and responses were filtered based on parental status.

Nearly half of all young adults (49%) say their age group is having the hardest time, but even in the teeth of their own downbeat assessment, their long-term economic optimism remains notably unscarred by current travails.

The survey finds that nearly nine-in-ten of today's 18- to 34-year-olds say either that they already have or that they earn enough money to lead the kind of life they want (31%) or that they expect to have enough in the future (57%). Just 9% say they don't ever anticipate having enough money to lead the kind of life they want.

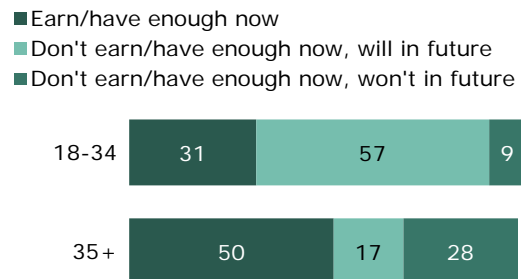
Among adults ages 35 and older, the balance of opinion on this question is quite different, driven in part by life stage and in part by attitude. A much higher share—50% versus 31% among young adults—say they already earn or have enough money to lead the kind of life they want, not surprising given that more of them are in their prime earning years. But the survey also finds that a much higher share—28% of those 35 and older versus just 9% among young adults—say they don't think they will ever have or earn enough to live the life they want.

When the same questions were asked on a survey in 2004—before the onset of a deep recession and sluggish recovery that have been especially hard on young adults—the generational patterns in the responses were nearly identical. Bad times, in short, have not shaken youthful optimism.

Only time will tell if that optimism is warranted. For now, despite the recent decline in the unemployment rate, an array of government trend data bears out the public's verdict about the economic difficulties facing the young, especially in the realms of employment, wages and household wealth.

### Youthful Optimism, in the Face of Tough Economic Times

% saying they ...



Notes: Based on all adults, N=2,048. The analysis combines the results of four questions. Employed adults were asked if they "earn enough money" to lead the kind of life they want; respondents who were not employed were asked if they "have enough income" to lead the kind of life they want. "Don't know/Refused" responses not shown.

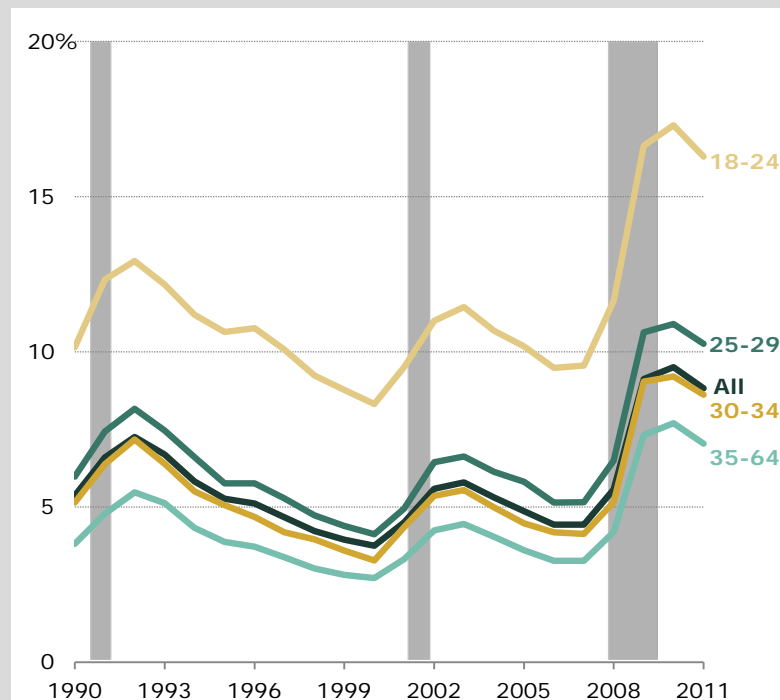
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- **Employment.** In 2011, the share of young adults (18- to 24-year-olds) who were employed had fallen to 54.3%—the lowest level since the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics began collecting such data in 1948. Since the onset of the Great Recession in late 2007, the employment decline has been steeper for this age cohort than any other, and this drop is only partly explained by the rising share who are in college. The employment rate among those ages 25 to 34 has fallen much less precipitously in recent years and has tracked more closely with the trend in employment among middle-aged workers.

- **Unemployment.** The unemployment in 2011 was 16.3% for 18- to 24-year-olds, compared with 8.8% for all adults ages 18 to 64. In the past three years, the gap in the unemployment rate between 18- to 24-year-olds and all working-age adults is the widest in recorded history.

- **Weekly Earnings.** From 2007 to 2011, inflation-adjusted real median weekly earnings among full-time workers ages 18 to 24 fell by 6%, while earnings basically held level for all older age groups.

Unemployment Rate, by Age, 1990-2011



Notes: Shaded areas represent economic downturns. "All" refers to ages 18 to 64.

Source: Tabulated by the Pew Research Center from data published by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

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- **Household Wealth.** A Pew Research analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data finds that in 2009 (the latest year for which such data are available), the typical household headed by someone age 65 or older had 47 times the net worth of the typical household headed by someone under the age of 35. In 1984, that ratio had been ten-to-one.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> See "[The Rising Age Gap in Economic Well-Being](#)," Pew Research Center's Social & Demographic Trends project, Nov. 7, 2011.



Findings from the new Pew Research survey, which oversampled adults ages 18 to 34, flesh out these gloomy statistics and paint a nuanced picture of the lives of today's young adults.<sup>6</sup> They are much less satisfied with their economic circumstances than they were before the recession, yet they remain just as optimistic about their financial future. Those who are working value job security over higher pay, though relatively few see their current occupation as a career.

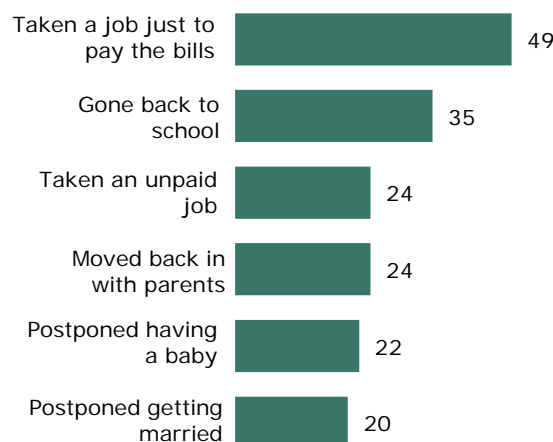
## The Recession's Impact on the Young

A plurality of the public says young adults are having the toughest time in today's economy, and young people themselves are indeed feeling this most acutely. Fully half (49%) of those ages 18 to 34 say young adults are struggling the most due to economic conditions. For the young, the impact of the recession and weak recovery has not been limited to the labor market. They have felt it in their day-to-day lives on many dimensions.

Among adults under age 35, 49% say that due to the bad economy over the past few years, they have taken a job they didn't want just to pay the bills. More than one-third (35%) have gone back to school. And more than one-in-five have taken an unpaid job, moved back in with their parents, or postponed getting married or having a baby.

### How Economic Conditions Have Affected Young Adults' Lives

*% of 18- to 34-year-olds saying they have done each in recent years because of economic conditions*



Note: Based on adults ages 18-34, n=808.

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In the midst of these challenges, today's young adults are clearly having a harder time than their parents did in reaching some of the most basic financial milestones. Young adults themselves feel things are more difficult now. And middle-aged and older adults agree it's much harder to be a young adult today than it was a generation ago.

<sup>6</sup> While government statistics identify the 18- to 24-year-old age group as suffering the greatest losses in jobholding in recent years, the survey included an oversample of a broader group of young adults—those ages 18 to 34. This sampling approach provided a larger pool of young adults who were employed and also allowed for age comparisons among young adults. A total of 808 interviews were conducted with respondents ages 18 to 34.

Strong majorities of all adults say it's harder for today's young people than it was for their parents to find a job (82%), save for the future (75%), pay for college (71%) or buy a home (69%). In some cases, middle-aged and older adults are even more likely than their younger counterparts to say today's young people have it harder.

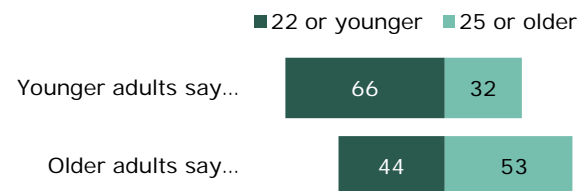
All of this may be contributing to a growing perception that adulthood starts later these days than it did in the past. Survey respondents were asked at about what age children should have to be financially independent from their parents. Among all survey respondents, a narrow majority (55%) say children should be financially independent by the time they are 22 years old (15% say financial independence should come by age 18, 40% place the cutoff at age 22). More than four-in-ten say children do not have to be financially independent until they are 25 or older (34% say children should be on their own by age 25, an additional 8% say age 30 or later).

Data from a survey conducted in the early 1990s suggest that public perceptions about when adulthood should begin have shifted significantly over the years. In 1993, 80% of parents with children age 16 and under said children should be financially independent by the age of 22. Now, only 67% of parents with young children share that view.

In the current survey, there is a significant age gap on this question of when a young adult should be financially independent. Two-thirds of those younger than 35 say children should be financially independent by age 22. And nearly as many (63%) of those ages 35 to 49 say the same. However, among those ages 50 and older, less than half (44%) say children should be financially independent by age 22, while a narrow majority (53%) says this doesn't need to happen until they are at least 25.

### Different Perspectives on Coming of Age

*% saying children have to be financially independent from their parents by age ...*



Note: "Younger adults" are those ages 18-34 (n=808); "older adults" are those ages 50 and older (n=641). "Don't know/Refused" responses not shown.

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Middle-aged adults have not been immune from the hard economic times. If any group has weathered the storm more easily than others, it has been older adults—those ages 65 and older. Looking at the impact the recession has had on personal finances illustrates this point. In a 2004 Pew Research survey, roughly equal proportions of young, middle-aged and older adults rated their own personal financial situation "excellent" or "good." When asked again at

the end of 2011, the ratings of young and middle-aged adults had fallen dramatically, while the ratings for older adults were virtually unchanged.<sup>7</sup>

## Youthful Optimism

Recent economic hardship has not dampened the spirits of America's young adults. Though they have struggled to find jobs and make ends meet, they maintain a sense of optimism about their financial future.

Most young adults (68%), whether they are employed or not, don't feel they have the resources now to lead the kind of life they want. But among those who are dissatisfied with their current income, the vast majority are optimistic that in the future they will have enough to live comfortably.

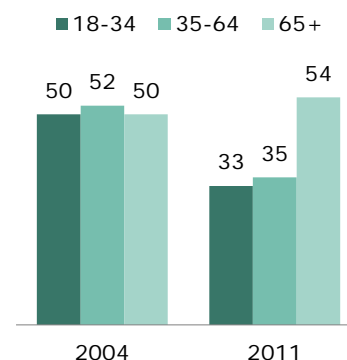
Fully nine-in-ten young adults (89%) who are employed but say they don't earn enough money to lead the kind of life they want believe they will earn enough in the future.

Only 10% expect that they will not. Among young adults who are not working and say they don't currently have enough income, 75% are confident they will have enough income in the future (18% believe they won't).

Not only are young adults optimistic about their own future, but they also believe their children will be better off when they reach young adulthood. Among those ages 18 to 34, 60% expect that when their children reach a comparable age their standard of living will exceed the standard of living their parents enjoy now. Among those ages 35 and older, only 43% have such high hopes for their

## The Recession's Impact on Personal Finances

*% rating their personal financial situation "excellent" or "good"*

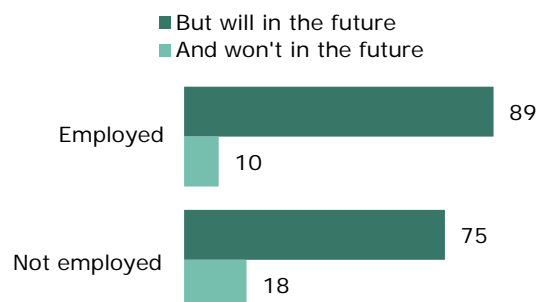


Source: Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, Aug. 5-10, 2004, and Dec. 7-11, 2011.

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## Times Are Tough, but the Future Looks Bright

*% of 18- to 34-year-olds who don't have enough income now ...*



Note: Based on adults ages 18-34, n=808.

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<sup>7</sup> Data from 2004 and 2011 are from surveys conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press. The 2004 survey was conducted Aug. 5-10 among 1,512 adults nationwide; the 2011 survey was conducted Dec. 7-11 among 1,521 adults.

children's future. More than a quarter of those 35 and older (27%) believe their children's standard of living will actually be worse than theirs is now.

For the most part, what young adults value in life mirrors the values of middle-aged and older adults—family comes first, career comes second. More than half (54%) of those ages 18 to 34 say being a good parent is one of the most important things in their life; 53% of those ages 35 and older say the same. Roughly one-third of young adults (34%) say having a successful marriage is one of the most important things in their life, as do 37% of those 35 and older. Young women value family and marriage significantly more than young men do. And young whites place more value on marriage than do young blacks.

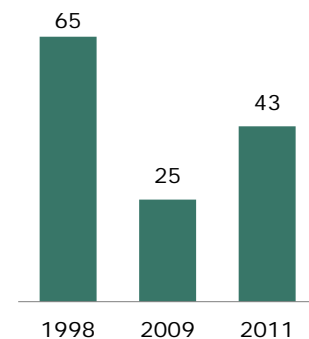
### Young Adults in the Workplace

While jobs are harder to come by for today's young adults, those who are employed are relatively happy with their work. Nearly one-third (31%) of workers ages 18 to 34 are completely satisfied with their job, and 53% more are somewhat satisfied. Job satisfaction among young workers is roughly the same as it was in the mid-1990s and remains somewhat lower than satisfaction among workers 35 and older.<sup>8</sup>

While young workers are relatively satisfied with their job, the recession may have shaken their confidence in their ability to find another job. In 1998, amid single-digit unemployment among the young, 65% of workers ages 18 to 34 said they were extremely or very confident that they could find another job if they lost or wanted to leave their current job. By 2009, the share who were extremely or very confident had plummeted to 25%. Young workers' attitudes have rebounded somewhat since then. In the current survey, 43% express a high level of confidence that if necessary they could find a new job.<sup>9</sup>

### Vulnerable Young Workers

*% of workers 18-34 saying they are "extremely" or "very" confident they could find a job if they lost or left their current job*



Note: Based on employed adults ages 18-34, n=550 for 2011. Data for 2009 are from a survey conducted by Rutgers Univ.; 1998 data are from a Rutgers/Univ. of Connecticut survey.

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<sup>8</sup> A 1994 Gallup/CNN/USA Today poll showed that among workers ages 18 to 34, 38% were completely satisfied with their job and 50% were somewhat satisfied. Among workers ages 35 and older, 40% were completely satisfied and 45% were somewhat satisfied.

<sup>9</sup> Data for 1998 are from a survey conducted by Rutgers University and the University of Connecticut, Aug. 5-16, 1998, among 1,001 adults nationwide. Data for 2009 are from a survey conducted by Rutgers University Nov. 5-15, 2009 among 652 adults nationwide. In both years the sample included those employed full time or part time and those unemployed but looking for work.

When asked what they value more in a job—security or a high salary—workers of all ages opt for job security. By 56% to 41%, workers ages 18 to 34 say, all other things being equal, they would prefer a job that offers better job security over a higher-paying job. A similar share of older workers prefer better job security over salary (59% to 34%).

Most young workers (69%) do not view their current job as a career—30% say it is a steppingstone to a career, and 39% say it is just a job for them to get by. Only three-in-ten describe their current job as a career.

Throughout young adulthood, there is a steady progression from job to career. Among the youngest workers (ages 18 to 24), only 11% say they are currently in a career. Workers ages 25 to 29 are three times as likely as their younger counterparts to say they are in a career (34%). And among workers ages 30 to 34, nearly half view their current job as a career. In this regard, they are no different from workers ages 35 and older, 52% of whom consider their job as a career.

Among all workers ages 18 to 34, those with a college degree are among the most likely to see their current job as a career: 49% view their occupation as a career, while only 17% say it's just a job to get them by. Young workers who are still enrolled in school are among the least likely to view their job as a career (only 13% do). However, that will presumably change once they have completed their education. Among those young workers who do not have a college degree and are not enrolled in school, fully half (49%) say they think of their current job as just a job to get them by, and only one-in-four (27%) say it's a career. This group of workers may feel particularly vulnerable in today's economy. Though they are not pursuing a college degree, 61% say they need more education and training in order to get ahead in their job.

### Young Adults Transitioning from Job to Career

Among employed, % saying their current job is ...

■ Career ■ Steppingstone to career ■ Just a job



Note: Based on employed adults ages 18-34, n=550. "Don't know/Refused" responses not shown.

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## About the Report

The remainder of this report is organized as follows: Chapter 2 provides a look at trends in the labor market over the past two decades. Relying mainly on data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment trends are broken down by detailed age categories. Chapter 3 looks at the impact the recession has had on young adults—both generally and in more specific terms. Chapter 4 looks at young adults' optimism in the face of economic challenges and explores their goals for the future. Chapter 5 provides a look inside the work lives of young adults.

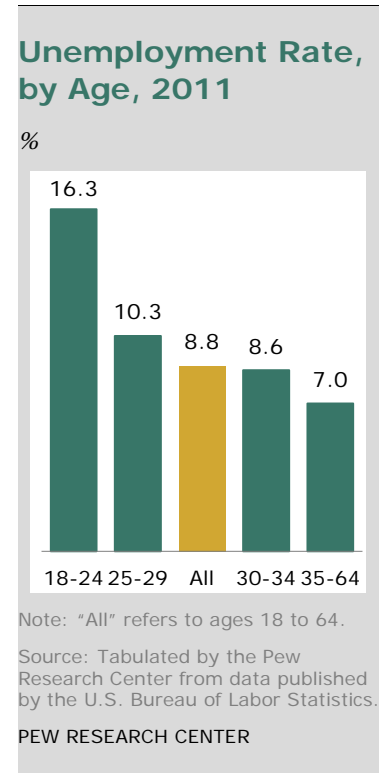
## Chapter 2: Young Adults in the U.S. Labor Market

The U.S. labor market is still struggling to recover from the effects of the Great Recession. The recession officially lasted from December 2007 to June 2009,<sup>10</sup> but the national unemployment rate continued to rise, peaking at 9.6% annually in 2010. Employment is recovering slowly, with the level in 2011 still 6 million fewer than the level in 2007.<sup>11</sup> The long shelf life of the economic downturn has pressed upon the economic well-being of virtually all workers, with the youngest adults (ages 18 to 24) among those most affected.<sup>12</sup>

In the past decade—and especially since 2007—young adults (ages 18 to 24) have faced a difficult job market. The unemployment rate for young adults is almost double the overall rate. Over the past two years a smaller share of the young adult population has been employed than at any time since 1948, the first year these data became available, and a growing share has left the labor market. Moreover, the Great Recession had a more severe impact on the earnings of young adults than on those of any other age group.

Adults ages 25 to 34 have also encountered a tough labor market in the past decade. However, the recession did not harm their employment prospects or affect their earnings as much as it did for the youngest adults. Overall, trends in employment and earnings for adults ages 25 to 34 have approximated the trends for the broader workforce.

This chapter reports on labor market outcomes for young adults and other workers grouped by age. The focus is on trends for people ages 18 to 64 over the past two decades and on the changes wrought by the Great Recession. We omit 16- and 17-year-olds and people 65 and older from the analysis because of their limited engagement with the labor market.<sup>13</sup>



<sup>10</sup> Business cycle dates are determined by the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER), <http://www.nber.org/cycles/cyclesmain.html>.

<sup>11</sup> These statistics on the unemployment rate and the employment level are from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and encompass people 16 and older.

<sup>12</sup> A 2010 report by the Pew Research Center examined the impact of the Great Recession on demographic subgroups. See "[How the Great Recession Has Changed Life in America](#)," Social & Demographic Trends, June 30, 2010.

<sup>13</sup> The Pew Research Center published a report in 2009 that focused on older Americans in the labor market. See "[The Recession Turns a Graying Office Grayer](#)," Social & Demographic Trends, Sep. 3, 2009.

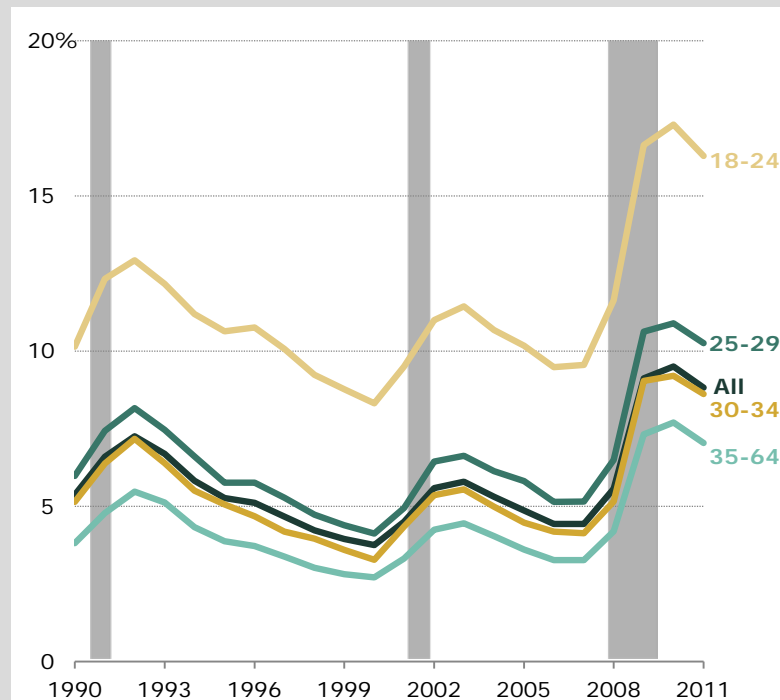
## The Unemployment Rate

In 2011, the unemployment rate among 18- to 24-year-olds was 16.3%. That was six percentage points higher than the rate for 25- to 29-year-olds (10.3%) and nearly eight points higher than the rate for those ages 30 to 34 (8.6%). The unemployment rate comprises workers who are not currently working but are actively looking for work as a share of the total labor force: those with a job or actively looking for one. Overall, the unemployment rate for 18- to 64-year-olds was 8.8% in 2011.

Unemployment rates for all age groups rise and fall with the business cycle in similar fashion. It is clear, however, that the youngest adults are

set apart from other age groups with consistently high unemployment rates. In the past two decades, through three recessions and a record-long period of economic growth, the unemployment rate for 18- to 24-year-olds was typically four percentage points or more higher than the rate for 25- to 29-year-olds. It was higher still in comparison with other age groups. For most age groups, unemployment rates peaked in 2010 at the highest levels since 1948.<sup>14</sup>

Unemployment Rate, by Age, 1990-2011



Notes: Shaded areas represent economic downturns. "All" refers to ages 18 to 64.

Source: Tabulated by the Pew Research Center from data published by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

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<sup>14</sup> A slight exception occurs in the case of 25- to 29-year-old workers. Their unemployment in 2010—10.9%—was slightly below their 11.0% unemployment rate in 1982.



## The Employment Rate

The employment rate, also known as the employment-to-population ratio, is the share of the working age population (ages 16 and older) that is working. During the Great Recession, the employment rate for young adults fell more than for any other age group. Just over half of 18- to 24-year-olds (54.3%) were employed in 2011, compared with 62.4% in 2007, a 13% decrease.<sup>15</sup> The current employment rate, along with a nearly identical one in 2010 (54.0%), marked the lowest employment-to-population ratio for young adults since 1948.<sup>16</sup>

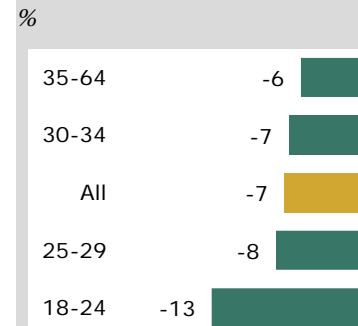
The employment rate is a general indicator of the labor market's job-creating capacity. Other age groups also experienced declines in their employment rates with the onset of the recession, but not as much as the decline for young adults. From 2007 to 2011, the employment rate of 25- to 29-year-olds fell 8% and the employment rate of 30- to 34-year-olds fell 7%. The employment rate of 35- to 64-year-olds decreased by 6% during that period.<sup>17</sup>

The relatively sharp decline in the employment rate for 18- to 24-year-olds predates the recession. From 2000 to 2007, their employment rate fell from 67.3% to 62.4%, a 7% drop. That decrease again was much higher than the decrease for any other age group.

An increase in high school and college enrollment is one reason that fewer young adults are on the job today. In 2011, 45.2% of 18- to 24-year-olds were enrolled in high school or college—a large increase from 1990, when only about three-in-ten young adults (31.3%) were pursuing education. Since students are less likely to seek employment than adults who are not in school, some of the employment rate decline among young adults reflects their increased pursuit of formal schooling.

But the Great Recession broadly reduced the employment rate of young adults regardless of whether they were in school. The share of 18- to 24-year-olds enrolled in high school or college

### Percentage Change in Employment-to-Population Ratio, by Age, 2007-2011



Note: "All" refers to ages 18 to 64.

Source: Tabulated by the Pew Research Center from data published by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

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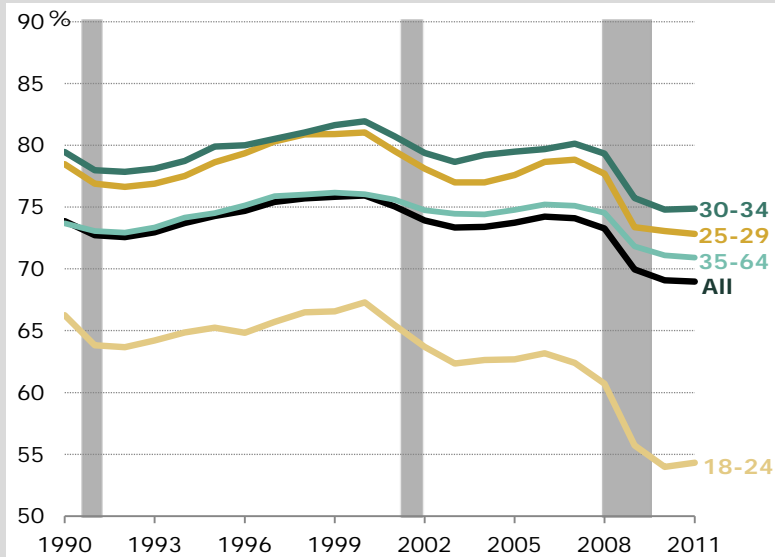
<sup>15</sup> The decrease represents the size of the change as a percent of the original value. In this case, employment fell by 8.1 percentage points, which is 13% of the original rate (62.4%). Throughout this section, rate changes are presented in terms of percent change rather than the percentage point change.

<sup>16</sup> The employment rate for 18- to 24-year-olds peaked at 67.6% in 1989.

<sup>17</sup> Adults 65 and older experienced an increase in their employment rate. That trend began about a decade ago and persisted through the recession because of delayed retirement among older workers.

who were employed dropped from 47.6% in 2007 to 40.7% in 2011. Among young adults not enrolled in high school or college, the employment rate fell from 73.2% in 2007 to 65.0% in 2011. Thus, there was an across-the-board decrease in the employment rate of young adults, a trend that was given a further push downward with the increased enrollment of young adults in educational institutions.

### Employment-to-Population Ratio, by Age, 1990-2011

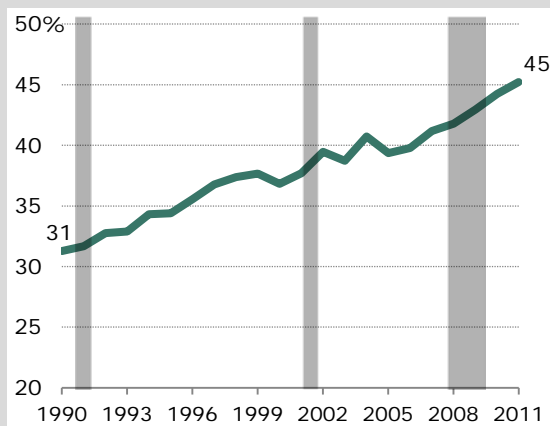


Note: Shaded areas represent economic downturns. "All" refers to ages 18 to 64.

Source: Tabulated by the Pew Research Center from data published by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

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### Share of Population of 18- to 24-Year-Olds Enrolled in School or College, 1990-2011

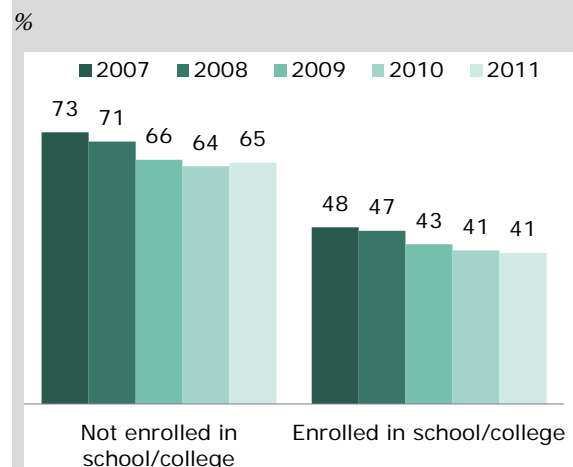


Note: Shaded areas represent economic downturns.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of Current Population Survey data.

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### Employment-to-Population Ratio by School Enrollment, Ages 18 to 24, 2007-2011



Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of Current Population Survey data.

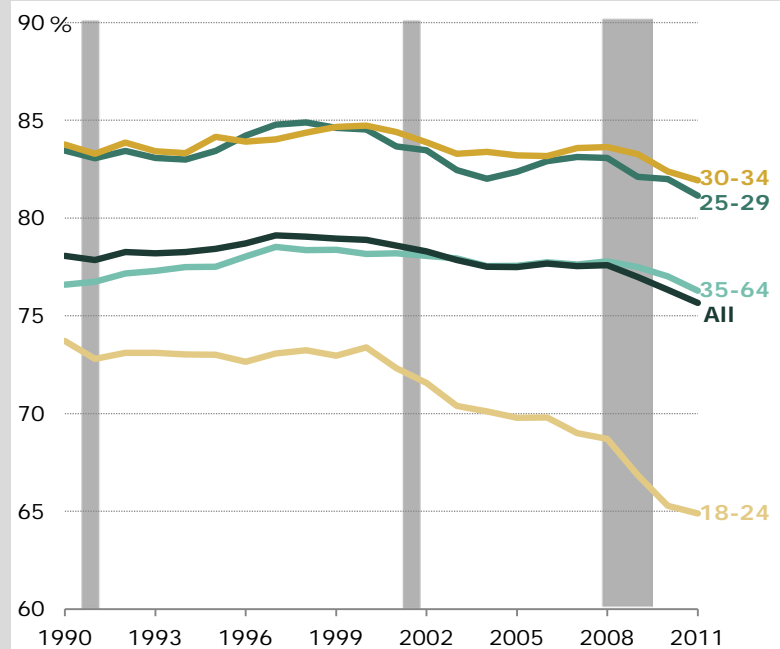
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## Labor Force Participation

The labor force, an indicator of the supply of workers, includes people on the job or actively looking for one. Labor force participation tends to rise with emerging job opportunities during economic expansions and to fall with waning employment prospects during recessions.

Young adults, many of whom are enrolled in school or college, generally participate in the labor force at a lower rate than adults 25 and older. Partly driven by the ongoing rise in school enrollments, the labor supply of 18- to 24-year-olds fell more than any other age group during the Great Recession.

**Labor Force Participation Rate, by Age, 1990-2011**



Notes: Shaded areas represent economic downturns. "All" refers to ages 18 to 64.

Source: Tabulated by the Pew Research Center from data published by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

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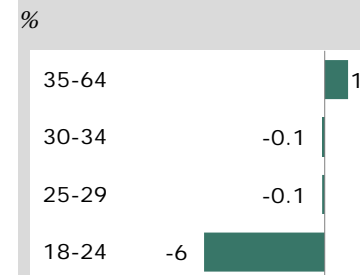
The labor force participation rate among young adults shrank from 69.0% in 2007 to 64.9% in 2011, a decrease of 6%. The drop in labor participation for 25- to 29-year-olds was more modest, from 83.1% in 2007 to 81.1% in 2011. For 30- to 34-year-olds, the labor force participation rate decreased from 83.6% to 81.9% during this period.

## Weekly Earnings

The Great Recession harmed not only the employment prospects of workers, but also their paycheck. Young adults, who are typically at the start of their career and earnings ladder, also experienced the greatest drop in weekly earnings as a result of the recession. It is possible that employers constrained the wages of entry-level jobs more than they did for other jobs during the recession.

In 2011, the median weekly earnings of 18- to 24-year-olds who worked full time were \$448. That figure was 6.1% less than their median earnings of \$477 in 2007. Workers ages 25 to 29 and ages 30 to 34 experienced no change in their wages. For 25- to 29-year-olds who worked full time, median weekly earnings were \$651 in 2007 and \$650 in 2011. The earnings of 30- to 34-year-olds were \$751 in 2007 and \$750 in 2011. (All earnings figures are expressed in 2011 dollars.)

### Percentage Change in Real Median Weekly Earnings, by Age, 2007-2011

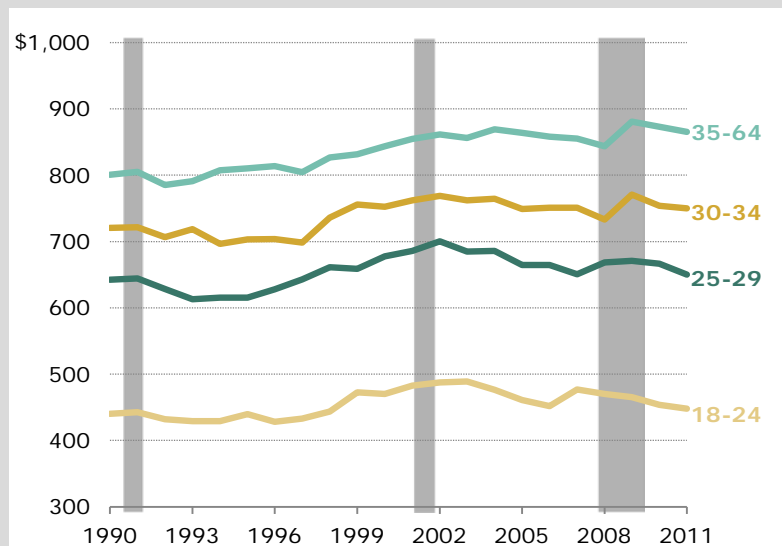


Note: Figures adjusted to 2011 dollars and refer to the earnings of full-time workers. The self-employed are excluded.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of Current Population Survey data, annual outgoing rotation files.

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### Median Real Weekly Earnings, by Age, 1990-2011



Notes: Shaded areas represent economic downturns. Figures adjusted to 2011 dollars and refer to earnings of full-time workers. The self-employed are excluded.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of Current Population Survey data, outgoing rotation files.

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## CHAPTER 3: HOW TODAY'S ECONOMY IS AFFECTING YOUNG ADULTS

Recent economic times have been particularly hard on young adults. The economic data illustrate this, especially with regard to the labor market. And the public recognizes it. When asked which age group is having a harder time in today's economy, a plurality of Americans (41%) say young adults are struggling the most. Roughly three-in-ten (29%) say middle-aged adults are having the toughest time, and 24% point to older Americans.

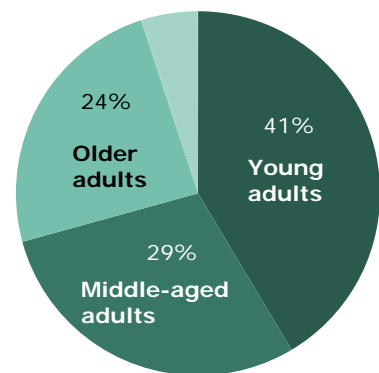
Opinion about this is fairly consistent across major demographic groups. Men and women agree that young people are suffering the most from today's tough economic times. Whites and blacks are also largely in agreement—with pluralities of both groups saying young people are having the hardest time.

More affluent adults and those with higher levels of education are among the most likely to say that young people are struggling in today's economy. Nearly half (48%) of college graduates say young adults are having the hardest time these days. This compares with 37% of those whose educational attainment is a high school diploma or less. Similarly, adults with annual household incomes of \$75,000 or higher are much more likely than those making less than that to say young people have been hit harder than their older counterparts (52% vs. 37%, respectively).

Young adults themselves have a very clear sense that they have suffered more than other age groups as a result of the nation's recent economic struggles. Fully 55% of those ages 18 to 24 say young adults are having the toughest time in today's economy. Roughly one-in-four (26%) say middle-aged adults have had a tougher time, and only 17% say older adults have struggled most.

### Young Adults Hardest Hit

*All things considered, which age group is having a tougher time in today's economy ...?*



Note: Based on all adults, N=2,048. "All equal" and "Don't know/Refused" responses are shown but not labeled.

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The views of those ages 25 to 34 are somewhat different than their younger counterparts: 44% say young adults are having the hardest time in today's economy. Middle-aged Americans are among the least likely to say young people have been hardest hit by economic hard times. Still, pluralities in most age groups acknowledge that young adults have been hit disproportionately hard.

### The Day-to-Day Realities of Economic Hard Times

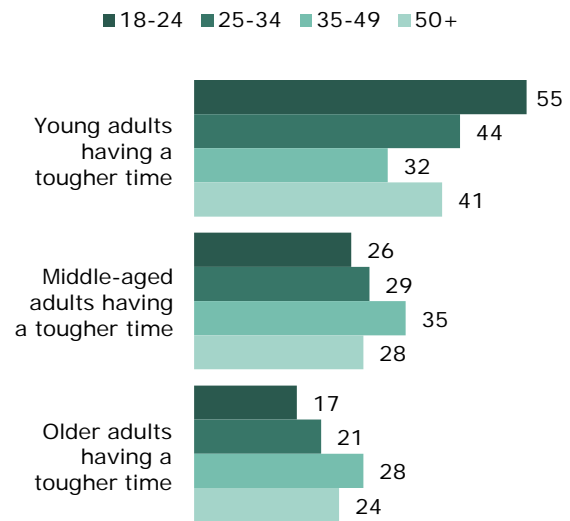
Many young adults have felt the impact of the recession and sluggish recovery in tangible ways. Fully half (49%) of those ages 18 to 34 say that because of economic conditions over the past few years, they have taken a job they didn't really want just to pay the bills. More than a third (35%) say they have gone back to school because of the bad economy. And one-in-four (24%) say they have taken an unpaid job to gain work experience.

For some, tough economic times have had an impact on their personal life as well. Roughly a quarter of adults ages 18 to 34 (24%) say that, due to economic conditions, they have moved back in with their parents in recent years after living on their own. Among those ages 25 to 29, the share moving back home rises to 34%. Most adults under age 25 are enrolled in school at least part time (46% are full-time students). By age 25, the majority are out of school, but jobs and housing can be hard to come by, and many "boomerang" back home.

More than one-in-five young adults ages 18 to 34 (22%) say they have postponed having a baby because of the bad economy. Roughly the same proportion (20%) say they have postponed getting married.

### Youngest Adults Feeling their Own Pain

*% saying each group is having a tougher time in today's economy, by age*



Notes: Based on all adults, N=2,048. "All equal" and "Don't know/Refused" responses not shown.

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There are some significant differences in the impact of the recession among young adults by race, particularly in the areas of education and employment. The economic data show that young blacks have an even higher unemployment rate than do young whites or young Hispanics. And even for young blacks who are working, their employment situation may not be highly satisfying. More than six-in-ten (62%) blacks ages 18 to 34 say in recent years they have taken a job they didn't really want just to pay the bills. This compares with 47% of whites in the same age group and 54% of Hispanics.

Young blacks are also more likely to report that they have gone back to school because of hard economic times. Half of the young blacks surveyed say they have returned to school in recent years, compared with 32% of young whites and 36% of Hispanics.

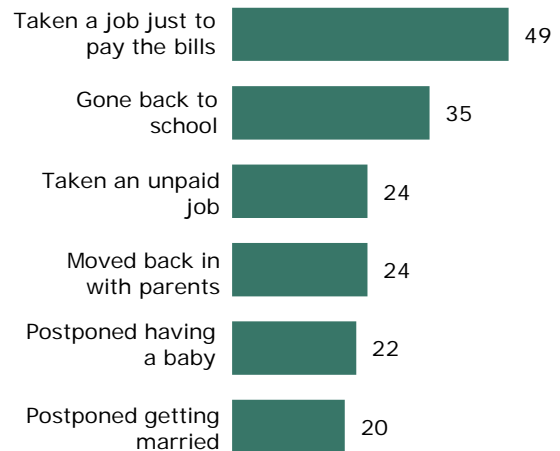
Young whites and Hispanics are more than twice as likely as young blacks to say they have moved back in with their parents after living on their own because of economic conditions. Among those ages 18 to 34, 26% of whites and 29% of Hispanics say they have moved back home, compared with 13% of blacks.

Young Hispanics are more likely than young whites to say they have postponed getting married because of the economy.

While race and ethnicity seem to have divided young adults in terms of the impact of the recession, there are very few differences along gender lines. Men suffered much greater job

## How Economic Conditions Have Affected Young Adults' Lives

*% of 18- to 34-year-olds saying they have done each in recent years because of economic conditions*

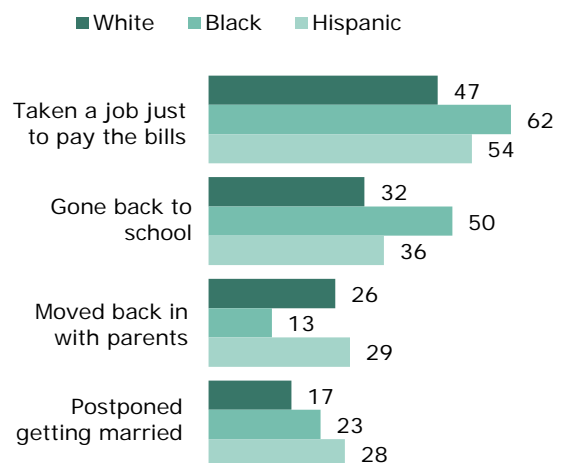


Note: Based on adults ages 18-34, n=808.

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## The Recession's Impact, by Race

*% of 18- to 34-year-olds saying they have done each*



Note: Based on adults ages 18-34, n=808.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q29

losses than women during the recession. However, the current survey finds that the impact of recent economic conditions has been fairly equal on young men and young women. Among those ages 18 to 34, men and women are equally likely to report that, in recent years due to economic conditions, they have taken a job they really didn't want just to pay the bills. Similar shares say they have gone back to school (35% of young men and 36% of women). And they are equally likely to say they have moved back in with their parents and postponed marriage and childbirth.

There is one significant difference between young men and young women. While 30% of men ages 18 to 34 say they have taken an unpaid job to gain experience in recent years, only 18% of young women say they have done the same.

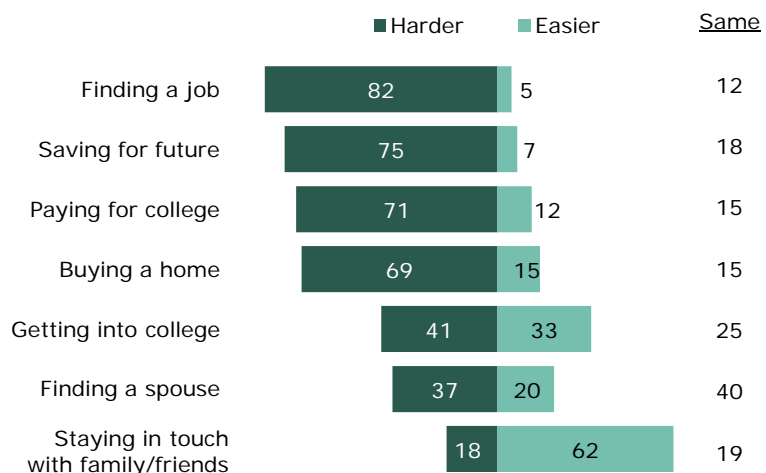
When it comes to marriage and family, young adults without a college education are among the most likely to say economic conditions have affected their plans. Among those ages 18 to 34 who are not college graduates and are not currently enrolled in school, nearly three-in-ten (28%) say they have put off getting married and an equal proportion say they have put off having a baby because of the economy. Among young adults who graduated from college or are currently enrolled in school, only about half as many say the same.

## The Challenges Facing Today's Young Adults

There seems to be a near consensus among the public that today's young adults face greater challenges than their parents did in reaching some of the most basic economic benchmarks. Strong majorities of the public say it's harder for young adults today to find a job, save for the future, pay for college or buy a home than it was for their parents' generation.

## Times Are Tougher for Today's Young Adults

*% saying ... is harder/easier/about the same for today's young adults than it was for their parents' generation*



Notes: Based on all adults, N=2,048. "Don't know/Refused" responses not shown.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q10



Among adults of all ages, 82% say it's harder for today's young adults to find a job than it was for their parents' generation. Only 5% say it's easier now to find a job, and 12% say finding a job is about the same as it was a generation ago.

Three-out-of-four adults say it's harder for young people to save for the future today than it was for their parents. And seven-in-ten (69%) say it's harder for today's young adults to buy a home.

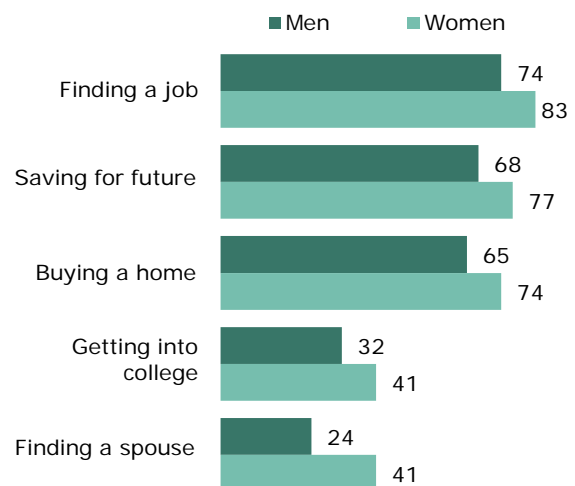
Paying for college is also viewed as a greater challenge today than it was in the past. Fully 71% of all adults say it's harder for today's young people to pay for college than it was for their parents' generation. When it comes to getting into college, views are more mixed. Four-in-ten adults (41%) say it's harder for young people to get into college today than it was a generation ago. However, one-third say it's easier today, and 25% say it's about the same as it was for their parents' generation.

The public sees fewer challenges for today's adults in two areas outside of the economic realm. Only 37% of all adults say it's harder for today's young people to find a spouse or partner compared with their parents' generation. One-in-five say it's easier for today's young adults, and 40% say it's the same as it was for their parents' generation. When it comes to keeping in touch with friends and family, most adults (62%) say it's easier for today's young people to stay connected than it was for their parents. Only 18% say it's harder to keep in touch these days, and 19% say it's about the same.

Young and older adults tend to agree that, from an economic perspective, things are harder for those just starting out today than they were a generation ago. Adults ages 35 and older are even more likely than those ages 18 to 34 to say it's harder for young people to find a job today than it was for their parents' generation (84% vs. 79%). Middle-aged and older adults are also more likely than their younger counterparts to say it's harder for today's young people to get into and pay for college.

### Young Women See Greater Challenges

*% of 18- to 34-year-olds saying ... is harder for today's young adults than it was for their parents' generation*



Note: Based on adults ages 18-34, n=808.

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The cost of college has roughly tripled since 1980, and this burden often falls to the parents. This may help explain why parents of children ages 18 and older are even more likely than young adults themselves to say that paying for college is harder for young adults today than it was for their own generation.<sup>18</sup>

While young men and young women generally agree that they face greater economic challenges than their parents did, women provide an even more negative assessment than do men. Among those ages 18 to 34, women are more likely than men to say finding a job is harder for today's young adults than it was for their parents' generation (83% vs. 74%). They are also more likely to say it's harder for today's young adults to save for the future (77% vs. 68%). Similarly, more young women than men say it's harder to buy a home and harder to get into college than it was a generation ago.

The biggest gap between men and women involves personal life rather than finances. While 41% of women ages 18 to 34 say finding a spouse or partner is harder for today's young adults than it was for their parents' generation, only 24% of young men agree.

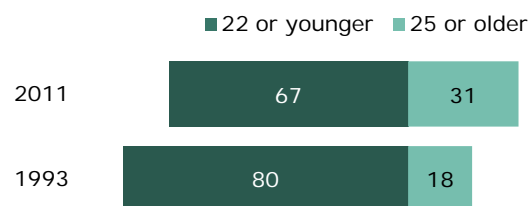
### Coming of Age in Challenging Times

One possible byproduct of the economic challenges today's young adults face may be shifting societal norms about when adulthood begins. When asked in a 1993 survey what age children should be financially independent from their parents, 80% of parents said children have to be self-reliant by age 22. In the current survey, only 67% of parents say children have to be financially independent by age 22—a drop of 13 percentage points.

Looking at the responses among all adults, regardless of parental status, a clear age pattern emerges. A solid majority of young adults (66%) believe children should be financially independent by age 22, including 23% who say they should be supporting themselves by age 18. By contrast, among those ages 50 and older, only 44% say children

#### When Does Adulthood Begin? Later than It Used To, Parents Say

*% of parents saying children have to be financially independent by age ...*



Notes: Based on parents with children age 16 or younger. For 2011, n=577. Data for 1993 are from a poll conducted by Newsweek and PSRA April 25-May 4, 1993. "Don't know/Refused" responses not shown.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q28

<sup>18</sup> For further analysis of the rising cost of higher education, see ["Is College Worth It? College Presidents, Public Assess Value, Quality and Mission of Higher Education,"](#) Pew Research Center's Social & Demographic Trends project, May 15, 2011.

have to be financially independent by age 22, while a narrow majority (53%) says they needn't be independent until age 25 or older. On this issue, the views of adults ages 35 to 49 are much closer to those of their younger counterparts than to those ages 50 and older.<sup>19</sup>

Being a parent of a young adult is also strongly correlated with views about when adulthood begins. Among those with children ages 18 or older, less than half (46%) say children need to be financially independent from their parents by age 22, while 51% say they don't need to be independent until age 25 or older.

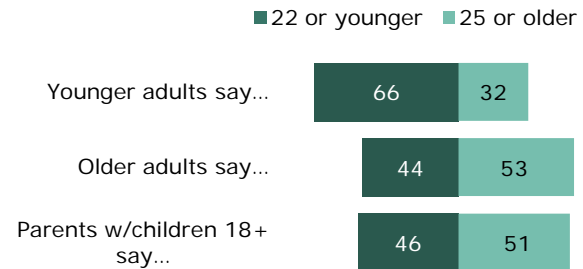
## Young Adults and Personal Finances

In spite of the economic challenges young people face, they are happy with their lives overall. One-third of those ages 18 to 34 say they are very happy with the way things are going in their life and an additional 55% say they are pretty happy. Young adults register somewhat higher levels of happiness than do their older counterparts, but they still find certain aspects of adult life difficult.

When it comes to their personal financial situation, young adults are somewhat less satisfied than middle-aged and older adults. Overall, 63% of those ages 18 to 34 say they are satisfied with their personal finances; however, only 20% are very satisfied. A similar share (24%) of those ages 35 to 49 are very satisfied with their personal finances, and the share

## Different Perspectives on Coming of Age

*% saying children have to be financially independent from their parents by age ...*

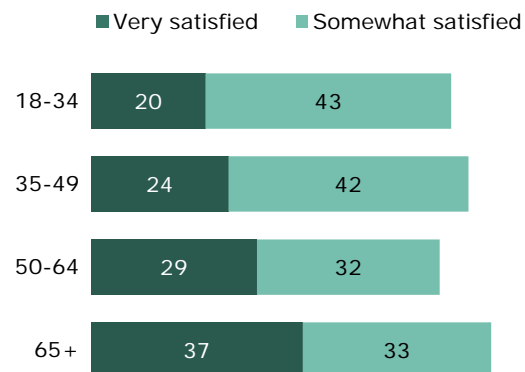


Note: "Younger adults" are those ages 18-34 (n=808); "older adults" are those ages 50 and older (n=641); for parents with children 18+, n=856. "Don't know/Refused" responses not shown.

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## Older Adults More Satisfied with Personal Finances

*% saying they are ... with their personal financial situation*



Notes: Based on all adults, N=2,048. "Somewhat dissatisfied," "Very dissatisfied," and "Don't know/Refused" responses not shown.

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<sup>19</sup> The question wording was as follows. "At about what age do you think children today should have to be financially independent from their parents? Would you say by age 18, age 22, age 25, age 30, or never?"

among those ages 50 to 64 is slightly higher (29%). Adults ages 65 and older are more satisfied than any other age group with their financial circumstances: 37% are very satisfied, and 33% are somewhat satisfied. The gap between the youngest and the oldest adults has grown wider in recent years. In February 2009, 21% of those ages 18 to 34 said they were very satisfied with their financial situation, compared with 31% of those ages 65 and older.<sup>20</sup>

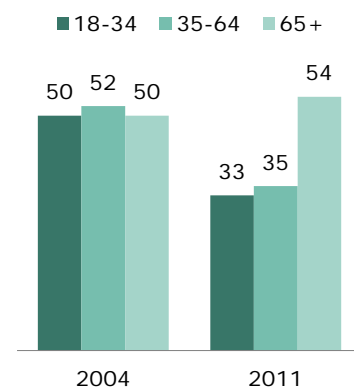
In a similarly worded question asked in 2004, before the recession began, there was no gap between young adults and older adults in their assessments of their personal finances. Equal shares (50%) of adults ages 18 to 34 and those ages 65 and older rated their personal financial situation as excellent or good. A separate Pew Research poll in December 2011 showed that a sizable gap (21 percentage points) had emerged between older adults and young adults—only a third of those ages 18 to 34 said they were in excellent or good financial shape, compared with more than half (54%) of those ages 65 and older. In the 2011 survey, older adults stood out in this regard, as middle-aged adults were closer to young adults in their assessments of their personal financial situation.

Not surprisingly, educational attainment and job satisfaction are linked to assessments of personal finances for all adults. College graduates are much more likely than those who have not graduated from college to say they are very satisfied with their personal financial situation. Among adults ages 18 to 34, 29% of those who have graduated from college say they are very satisfied with their financial situation. This compares with 19% of those who are currently enrolled in school and 17% who did not graduate from college and are not currently enrolled.

Job satisfaction is also highly correlated with satisfaction with personal finances. Among young adults who are employed, 42% of those who say they are completely satisfied with their current job are also very satisfied with their personal financial situation. Among those who say they are somewhat satisfied with their job, only 15% are very satisfied with their financial situation.

### The Recession's Impact on Personal Finances

*% rating their personal financial situation "excellent" or "good"*



Source: Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, Aug. 5-10, 2004 and Dec. 7-11, 2011.

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<sup>20</sup> Data from 2009 are from a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center's Social & Demographic Trends project, Feb. 23-Mar. 23, 2009, among 2,969 adults nationwide.

## Beyond Finances: Family Life, Housing and Education

Young adulthood is often marked by several major life transitions. Some young adults are still finishing their education, some are living on their own for the first time and some are starting their own families. Although the lives of many are not entirely settled, most young adults say they are highly satisfied with their family life. Nearly half are very satisfied with their present housing situation and with their education.

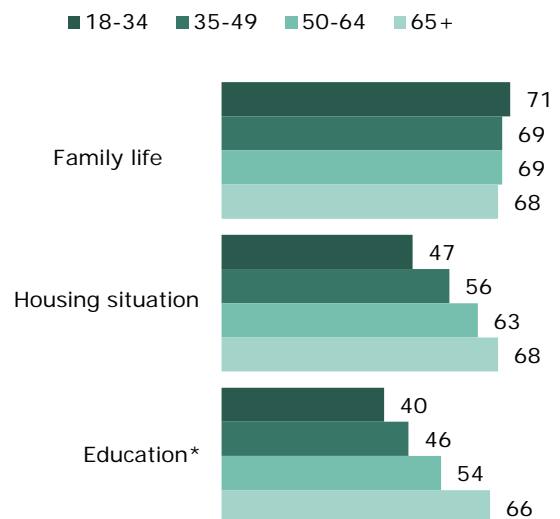
Adults of all ages are highly satisfied with their family life. Seven-in-ten adults ages 18 to 34 (71%) say they are very satisfied with this aspect of their life. Among those ages 35 to 49, 50 to 64 and 65 and older, nearly as many say the same.

Age is much more strongly related to satisfaction with living arrangements. This is not surprising, given that roughly a quarter of those ages 18 to 34 live with their parents, more than four-in-ten rent, and less than one-in-four own their own homes. Among adults under age 35, only 47% say they are very satisfied with their present housing situation. This compares with 62% among those ages 35 and older.

The gap in views about housing was not nearly as wide in 1996. Among those ages 18 to 34, 50% said they were very satisfied with their housing situation. Young adults were not markedly different from middle-aged adults in their regard—53% of those ages 35 to 49 said they were very satisfied with their housing situation. Among those ages 50 and older, satisfaction was significantly higher (65% for those ages 50 to 64 and 67% for those ages 65 and older).<sup>21</sup>

### Young Adults Less Satisfied with Housing, Education

% saying they are very satisfied with their ...



Notes: Based on all adults, N=2,048. \*Percentages for education are based on those not currently enrolled in school.

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<sup>21</sup> Data for 1996 are from a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, Nov. 22-Dec. 1, 1996, among 1,204 adults nationwide.

Young adults are less satisfied overall with their education when compared to their older counterparts. Granted, many of them have not yet completed their education. However, even among those ages 18 to 34 who are not currently enrolled in school, only four-in-ten say they are very satisfied with their education. This compares with roughly half (52%) of those ages 35 to 64 and 66% of those ages 65 and older.

College graduates of all ages are much more satisfied with their education than are those who have not completed college. Fully 71% of those under age 35 with a college degree say they are very satisfied with their education. Roughly half (52%) of young adults who are currently enrolled in school say they are very satisfied, and only 29% of those who are not enrolled and do not have a college degree say the same.

## CHAPTER 4: OPTIMISM IN THE FACE OF TOUGH TIMES

Despite the Great Recession and the sluggish recovery that followed, young adults remain extremely confident about their financial future. While a large majority of those ages 18 to 34 (whether they are employed or not) say they do not currently have enough money to lead the kind of life they want, most believe they will eventually attain that goal.

According to the new Pew Research survey, only 31% of all young adults say they now have enough income to lead the kind of life they want. However, an additional 57% say that while they don't have enough money now, they think they will in the future. Only one-in-ten (9%) say they don't have enough now to lead the kind of life they want and don't believe they ever will.<sup>22</sup>

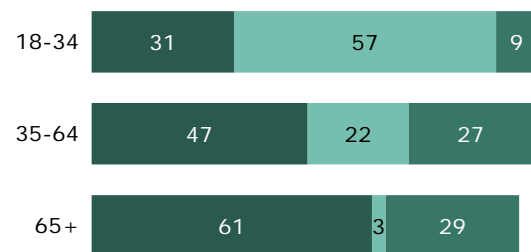
Middle-aged and older adults are more satisfied than young adults with the resources they have now. But the share that is pessimistic about their financial future is three times as high among the older age groups. Nearly half of those ages 35 to 64—prime earning years—say they currently have enough income to lead the kind of life they want. While 22% say they don't have enough now but believe they will in the future, fully 27% say they don't have enough now and don't think they will in the future.

Among adults 65 and older, most of whom are no longer working, 61% say they have enough income now to lead the kind of life they want. For those who say they don't currently have enough income, the vast majority don't anticipate this changing in the future: 29% say they don't have enough money now and they won't in the future. Only 3% say they think they will have enough money in the future.

### Young Adults Optimistic about Future Earnings

% saying they ...

- Earn/have enough now
- Don't earn/have enough now, will in future
- Don't earn/have enough now, won't in future



Notes: Based on all adults, N=2,048. The analysis combines the results of four questions. Employed adults were asked if they "earn enough money" to lead the kind of life they want; respondents who were not employed were asked if they "have enough income" to lead the kind of life they want. "Don't know/Refused" responses not shown.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q14, 15, 16, 17

<sup>22</sup> This analysis combines two separate sets of questions. Employed adults were asked whether they "earn enough money" to lead the kind of life they want, and if not, whether they thought they would be able to earn enough in the future. Adults who were not employed were asked whether they "have enough income" to lead the kind of life they want, and if not, whether they thought they would have enough income in the future.

While the recession affected many dimensions of economic life—wages, retirement savings, home values, debt—public attitudes about future earning potential have remained remarkably stable. A 2004 Pew Research survey asked the same series of questions of both employed and unemployed adults: Did they earn enough money or have enough income to lead the kind of life they wanted, and, if not, did they think they would be able to earn enough money in the future?<sup>23</sup>

Overall, young adults were more satisfied with their earnings or income in 2004 than they are today (41% said they had enough income to lead the kind of life they wanted versus 31% now). This is not surprising, given the significant falloff in jobholding among the youngest adults. Still, for the majority who did not have enough income in 2004, most said they expected to have enough in the future. Only 10% said they didn't think they ever would (compared with 9% now).

Roughly half of those ages 35 to 64 (51%) said they had enough income in 2004. Among those who said they didn't have enough, the balance of opinion about the future was more negative than positive. And, just as is the case today, a solid majority of older adults said they had enough income to lead the kind of life they wanted. Three-in-ten said they did not have enough income or earn enough money, and most in that group didn't think their situation would improve.

The consistent trend in opinion, in spite of the turbulent economic conditions during the intervening years, suggests that optimism is related more to the stage of life than to the dynamics of the national economy.

## Youthful Optimism in Wake of Recession

% of 18- to 34-year-olds saying they ...

- Earn/have enough now
- Don't earn/have enough now, will in future
- Don't earn/have enough now, won't in future



Notes: Based on adults ages 18-34, n=808 for 2011. Data for 2004 are from a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, May 3-9, 2004.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q14, 15, 16, 17

<sup>23</sup> Data for 2004 are from a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, May 3-9, 2004, among 1,800 adults nationwide (for 18- to 34-year-olds, n=464).



## Optimism in Spite of Frustration with Earnings, Income

While the share of young adults who are employed has fallen sharply in recent years, the way in which working young adults view their earnings has changed very little. In 1996, at a time when the national economy was thriving and many more young adults were employed, 66% of 18- to 34-year-olds who were working at least part time said they did not earn enough money to lead the kind of life they wanted.<sup>24</sup> In 2011, roughly the same proportion (62%) said they didn't earn enough.

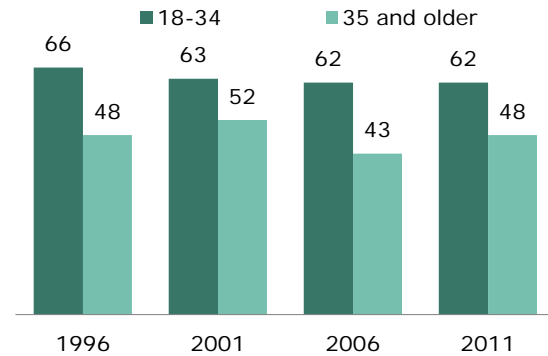
The gap between young workers and middle-aged and older workers has remained stable over this period. In 1996, 48% of workers ages 35 and older said they did not earn enough to lead the kind of life they wanted. In 2011, an identical share said the same.

The situation is much different for young adults who are not employed. In 2004, 56% of those ages 18 to 34 who were not employed said they did not have enough income to lead the kind of life they wanted. By 2011, 80% of this group reported that they did not have enough income to lead the kind of life they wanted—an increase of 24 percentage points from 2004.

Over that same period, the share of non-working adults ages 35 and older who said they did not have enough income increased only slightly, from 45% to 48%. As a result, the gap between young non-employed adults and their older counterparts increased significantly.

## In Good Times and Bad, No Change in Share Who Say They Aren't Earning Enough

*% of employed adults saying they do not earn enough to lead the kind of life they want*

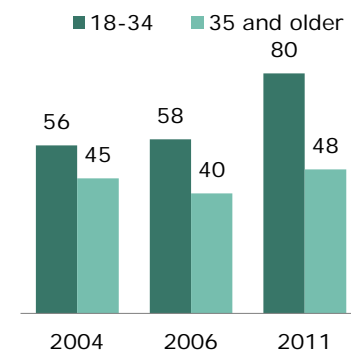


Note: Based on all employed adults, n=1,231 for 2011. All trend data are from Pew Research Center surveys.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q14

## Young & Unemployed Struggling More

*% of non-employed adults saying they do not have enough income to lead the kind of life they want*



Note: Based on all adults not employed, n=817 for 2011. All trend data are from Pew Research Center surveys.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q16

<sup>24</sup> Data for 1996, 2001 and 2004 are from surveys conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press (May 31-June 9, 1996, Jan. 3-7, 2001 & May 3-9, 2004). Data for 2006 are from a Pew Research Center's Social & Demographic Trends survey conducted Oct. 18-Nov. 9, 2006.

The good news is that for both working and non-working young adults, frustration with current earnings and income has not dampened their optimism about the future. Among those ages 18 to 34 who are employed and say they are not currently earning enough to lead the kind of life they want, fully 89% say they believe they will earn enough in the future.

Young adults who are not working are nearly as optimistic—75% of those who say they don't have enough income to lead the kind of life they want believe they will have enough money in the future. Less than one-in-five (18%) expect that they won't have enough.

Older adults are not nearly as upbeat about their future prospects. Among those ages 35 and older who are employed and are not currently making enough to lead the kind of life they want, less than half (48%) expect they will earn enough in the future. For those ages 35 and older who are not currently working, only 21% say the same.

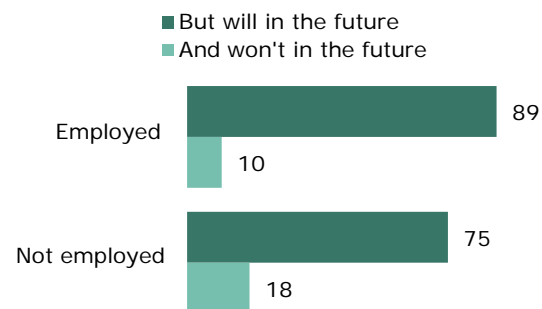
### Young Adults' Optimism Extends Far into the Future

Not only are young people optimistic about their own financial futures, but they also are confident that their children will be better off financially than they are now. In contrast, older people are significantly less optimistic that their children will fare better financially than they have. According to the survey, six-in-ten adults ages 18 to 34 expect their children to be doing better financially when they reach a comparable age, versus 43% of those 35 and older.

However, these data also suggest that views begin to change around the time a young person turns 30. Among those 18 to 29 years old, about two-thirds (65%) are optimistic about their

### Times Are Tough, but the Future Looks Bright

*% of 18- to 34-year-olds who don't have enough income now ...*

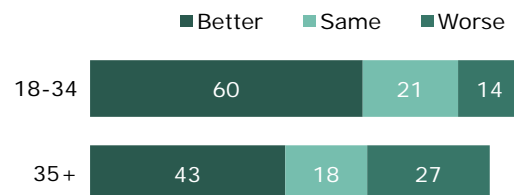


Note: Based on adults ages 18-34, n=808.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q15, 17

### Young Adults Optimistic about Their Children's Future

*When your children are at the age you are now, will their standard of living be ... than yours is now? (%)*



Notes: Based on all adults, N=2,048. "No children" and "Don't know/Refused" responses not shown.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q4

children's financial future. But among those just slightly older, 30 to 34, less than half (46%) are as hopeful.

These views of young people also vary by demographic group. Young women are significantly more likely than young men to predict that their children will do better financially than they have done (66% vs. 55%).

At the same time, minorities are far more optimistic about their children's future than are whites. More than seven-in-ten young blacks (71%) and a slightly larger share of young Hispanics (77%) expect that their children will have a better standard of living. In contrast, barely half of all young whites (52%) are equally optimistic about their children's financial futures.

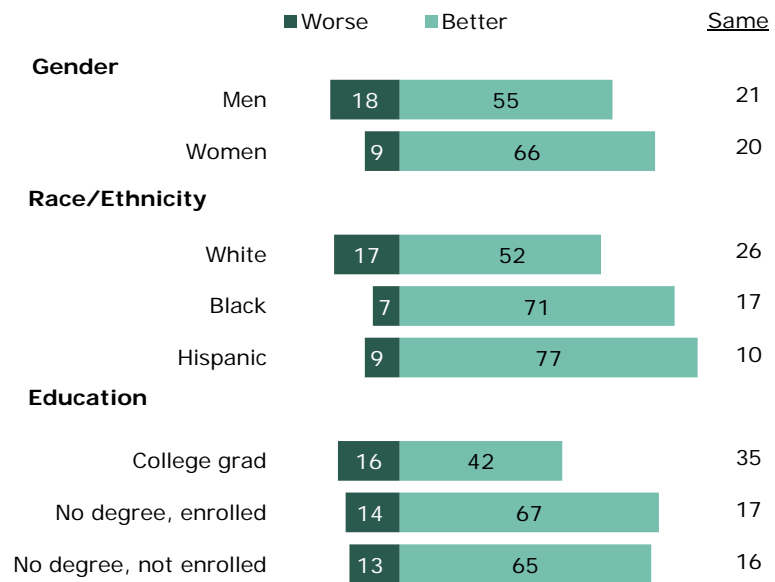
Young college graduates and more affluent young adults also are significantly less hopeful that their children will do better financially than they have done. According to the survey, only four-in-ten college graduates ages 18 to 34 (42%) are optimistic that

their children will do better economically than they have. More than one-third (35%) expect their children will do about the same as they have.

In contrast, about two-thirds of all those ages 18 to 34 who do not have a college degree (67% of those enrolled in school and 65% of those not enrolled) are confident that their children will surpass them.

## Looking to the Future

*Among those ages 18-34, % saying when their children are at a comparable age, their standard of living will be ...*



Note: Based on adults ages 18-34, n=808. Hispanics are of any race. Whites and blacks include only non-Hispanics. "No children" and "Don't know/Refused" responses not shown.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q4

## Achieving their Goals

In spite of the optimism gap between young and old in looking at their financial future, when it comes to meeting the broader goals in life, the generations have a similar outlook. Nearly three-quarters (73%) of adults ages 18 to 34 are optimistic that they will eventually achieve their goals in life or say they already have achieved them. A similar share of adults ages 35 and older (70%) also say they expect to accomplish their goals or already have attained them.

Not surprisingly, older adults are more likely than their younger counterparts to say they have already reached their goals (33% among those ages 35 and older versus 9% of those under age 35). A majority of young adults (64%) say they are optimistic that they will be able to achieve their goals.

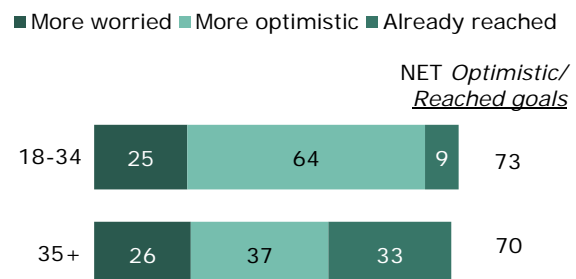
What is surprising is that the share of each age group saying they are worried that they will face many difficulties that might prevent them from achieving their goals is nearly identical. In spite of their different stages in life, 25% of those ages 18 to 34 and 26% of those ages 35 and older say they are more worried than optimistic about their future.

The belief among the young that they will achieve their life goals varies only slightly, if at all, among key demographic groups. Young men are just as likely as young women to say they expect to fulfill their ambitions (65% vs. 63%). Roughly six-in-ten young whites (62%) and a slightly larger share of young Hispanics (65%) are optimistic they will reach their goals, a view shared by 70% of young blacks.

But the survey found that young adults ages 18 to 34 who did not graduate from college and are not currently in school are the most concerned about falling short of their objectives. About three-in-ten of these less educated young adults (31%) say they are more worried than optimistic about accomplishing their goals in life, compared with 20% of those who are either college graduates or are still in school.

### Little Worry about Reaching Goals

% saying they are ... that they will be able to achieve their goals



Notes: Based on all adults, N=2,048. "Some of both" and "Don't know/Refused" responses not shown.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q5

## What Goals Are Most Important?

What types of goals are young people so optimistic about? In putting value to the different aspects of their lives, both young and older adults place more emphasis on parenting and marriage than on more material items, such as a high-paying career or home ownership.

More than half (54%) of young adults ages 18 to 34 say being a good parent is “one of the most important things” in their life, and an additional 39% say it is “very important but not the most.”

Over a third of young adults (34%) say having a successful marriage is one of the most important things, and 51% say it is very important.

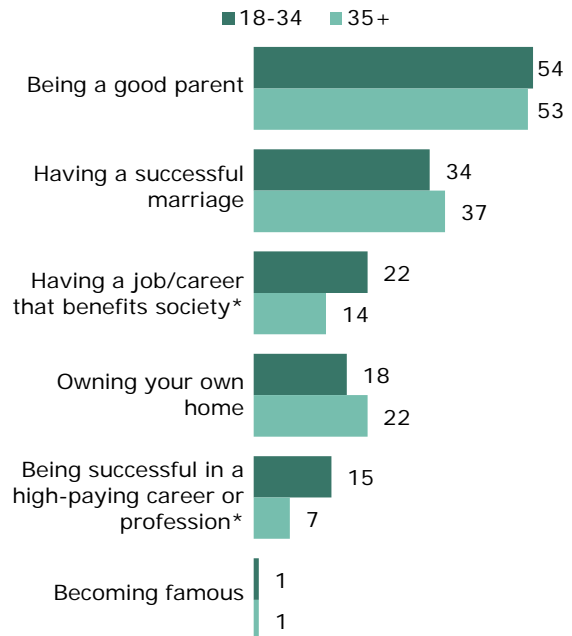
Similar shares of adults ages 35 and older say these two items are of top importance—53% of the older group says parenting is one of the most important things in their life (an additional 40% say this is very important). And 37% say having a successful marriage is one of the most important things in their life (46% say very important).

Compared with marriage and parenting, young adults place relatively less importance on career. Nevertheless, they are significantly more likely than older adults to say this is among the most important aspects of their life. Nearly a quarter (22%) of 18- to 34-year-olds say having a job that benefits society is one of the most important things in their life. Only 14% of those ages 35 and older say the same. And while 15% of young adults say being successful in a high-paying career is of utmost importance, less than half the share of older adults agrees (7%).

There is no significant difference between young and older adults in terms of the importance of owning their own home. Roughly one-in-five young adults (18%) and nearly the same share of

## Importance of Family, Career

% saying each is “one of the most important things” in their life



Note: Based on all adults, N=2,048. Asterisk items are split form, with about half of the sample getting each question.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q7

adults ages 35 and older (22%) say owning a home is one of the most important things in their life.

In addition, there is no difference between young and older adults in the importance of becoming famous—only 1% of each group says becoming famous is one of the most important things in their life.

The youngest among the 18 to 34 age group are even more career-focused than their older half. More than three-quarters (76%) of 18- to 24-year-olds rate a high-paying career or profession as one of the most important things or very important, while 25- to 34-year-olds are more moderate with 51% rating this so highly. Furthermore, 79% of 18- to 24-year-olds say having a job or career that benefits society is one of the most important things or very important; 66% of 25- to 34-year-olds agree.

Among young adults, several significant demographic differences emerge. For example, there is a gender split in the importance of marriage and parenting. While 61% of young women ages 18 to 34 list being a good parent as one of the most important things in their life, less than half of men (47%) say the same. And while 39% of women rate a successful marriage among their top priorities, only 29% of men place the same value on that.

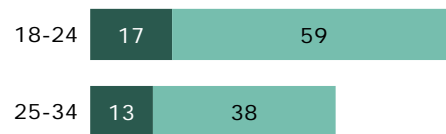
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## Young and Ambitious

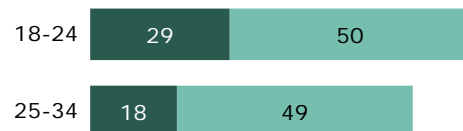
*% saying each is one of the most important or a very important thing in their life*

- One of the most important things
- Very important, but not the most

*Being successful in a high-paying career or profession ...*



*Having a job or career that benefits society ...*



Note: Based on adults ages 18-34. Items were asked of half the sample. For first item, n=384; for second, n=424.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q7

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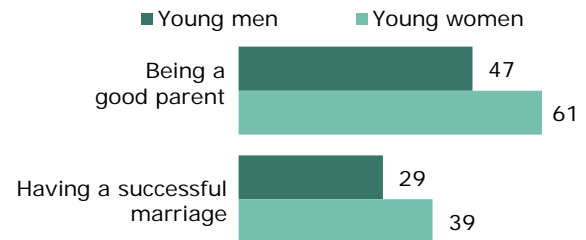
Several differences also appear among racial and ethnic categories of young adults. Fully 37% of young white adults, compared with only 22% of young black adults, say a successful marriage is one of the most important things in their life. Hispanics lie in the middle and do not differ significantly from either group.

Compared with whites, greater shares of both black and Hispanic young adults say owning their own home is among their top priorities. While 25% of blacks and 26% of Hispanics say owning a home is of the highest importance in their lives, only 12% of whites say the same.

Additionally, young blacks and Hispanics are more likely to value becoming famous than young white adults. Only 2% of whites ages 18 to 34 say becoming famous is one of the most important things or very important, but 15% of blacks and 13% of Hispanics rate fame as highly important.

## Family Importance, by Gender

% of 18- to 34-year-olds who say ... is "one of the most important things" in their life

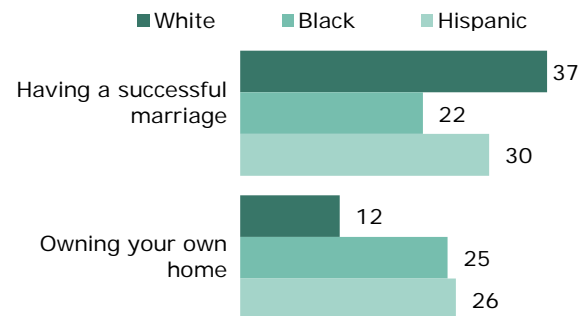


Note: Based on adults ages 18-34, n=808.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q7

## Marriage and Homeownership, by Race

% of 18- to 34-year-olds who say ... is "one of the most important things" in their life



Note: Based on adults ages 18-34, n=808. Hispanics are of any race. Whites and blacks include only non-Hispanics.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q7

## CHAPTER 5: YOUNG ADULTS AT WORK

### Satisfaction

A majority of working adults, regardless of age, say they are either completely or somewhat satisfied with their current job. Younger workers, ages 18 to 34, are a bit less likely than those 35 years and older to say they are completely satisfied; 31% of 18- to 34-year-old workers are completely satisfied, compared with 40% among workers 35 years and older.

Job satisfaction is roughly the same among both younger and older workers today as it was in a 1994 Gallup/CNN/USA Today poll.

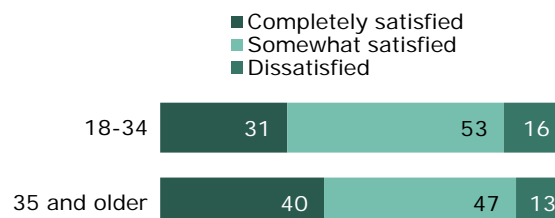
Gender differences among younger workers are modest. Younger women are more likely than younger men to describe themselves as “somewhat” satisfied with their job. Younger men are somewhat more likely than their younger women to say they are completely satisfied with their job.

Those with college degrees tend to report higher levels of job satisfaction, but the differences across education groups are modest and do not reach levels of statistical significance.

As expected, young adults with full-time jobs are more likely than those with part-time jobs to be completely satisfied with their work.

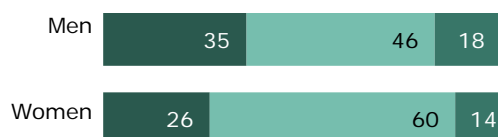
### Job Satisfaction, by Age

*Among those employed*

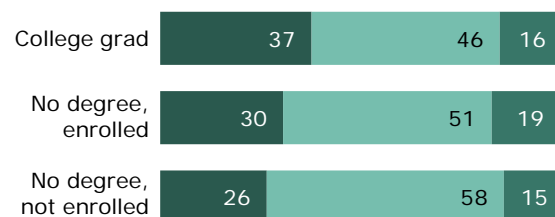


*Among those ages 18-34 ...*

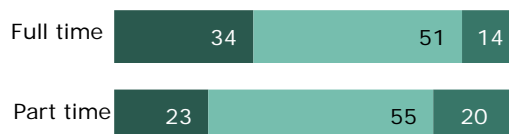
#### Gender



#### Education



#### Employment



Notes: Based on all employed adults, n=1,231. Those saying “completely” or “somewhat” dissatisfied are combined. “Don’t know/Refused” responses not shown.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q11



Among older workers, there are no significant differences in job satisfaction levels by gender or full- and part-time employment status.

Career orientation is strongly associated with job satisfaction among both younger and older workers. Those ages 18 to 34 who see their current position as a career are particularly likely to report being completely satisfied with their job—50% say this, compared with 31% among those who see their job as a steppingstone and 15% among those working in a position that is “just a job.”

## Career Orientation, Perceived Compensation Linked with Job Satisfaction

Among those 18 to 34 years old who are employed

	Completely satisfied %	Somewhat satisfied %	Dissatisfied %	DK/Ref %
<i>See current job as ...</i>				
A career	50	45	5	*=100
A steppingstone to career	31	57	12	0=100
Just a job to get by	15	56	28	1=100
<i>Compensation</i>				
Feel paid enough	46	45	8	1=100
Not paid enough	15	59	25	1=100

Notes: Based on employed adults ages 18-34, n=550. Those saying “completely” or “somewhat” dissatisfied are combined. The asterisk (\*) is a percentage greater than 0 and less than 0.5%.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q11, 12, Q23

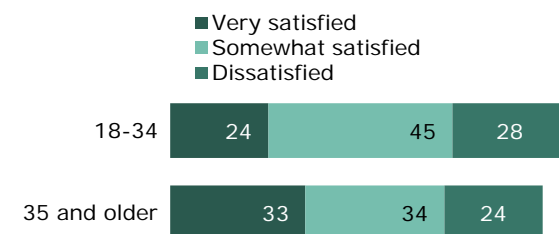
Further, those who think they are paid enough in their job given both the kind and amount of work they do are also more likely than those who feel they don’t get paid enough to report feeling completely satisfied. Among workers ages 18 to 34 who feel they are paid enough, 46% report being completely satisfied in their current position. In contrast, just 15% of younger workers who feel they are not paid enough say they are completely satisfied with their current position.

## Outlook for Moving Up

Workers of all ages tend to be at least somewhat satisfied with their chances for career advancement in their present position. Younger workers ages 18 to 34 are less likely than those 35 and older to be “very” satisfied with their chances for advancement. While the

## Satisfaction with Chances for Advancement, by Age

Among those employed



Notes: Based on all employed adults, n=1,231. Those saying “very” or “somewhat” dissatisfied are combined. “Don’t know/Refused” responses not shown.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q24

youngest workers, ages 18 to 24, are a bit more likely than other young workers to say they are “somewhat” satisfied with their chances for advancement, differences by age in satisfaction levels are modest overall.

Those who think of their current position as a career tend to be more satisfied with the opportunities for advancement than do those who think of their job as either a steppingstone to a career or as just a job. About four-in-ten (41%) workers ages 18 to 34 who see their position as a career report being very satisfied with their chances for advancement. By contrast, just 12% of younger workers who call their position “just a job” are very satisfied with their chances for advancement. Younger workers who see their current position as a steppingstone fall in the middle between these two groups, with 25% saying they are very satisfied with their chances for advancement.

### Satisfaction with Chances for Advancement

*Among those 18 to 34 years old who are employed*

	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Dissatisfied	Other/DK/REF
	%	%	%	%
18-24	22	53	24	1=100
25-29	27	39	33	2=100
30-34	25	42	27	5=100
<i>See current job as ...</i>				
A career	41	43	15	1=100
A steppingstone to career	25	43	30	1=100
Just a job to get by	12	49	35	5=100
College grad	29	38	29	5=100
No degree, enrolled	21	45	32	2=100
No degree, not enrolled	23	51	24	2=100
Work full-time	26	46	26	3=100
Work part-time	22	44	31	3=100

Notes: Based on employed adults ages 18-34, n=550. Those saying “very” or “somewhat” dissatisfied are combined.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q24

Younger workers in part-time positions express about the same level of satisfaction with advancement opportunities as do their age-peers working full time, however.

Satisfaction with advancement opportunities does not vary by gender or education levels. Younger male and female workers are about equally likely to say they are satisfied with the opportunities to advance in their position. The same holds among education groups. Younger workers with a college degree are about equally likely as those without a college degree (and not now enrolled in school) to say they are very satisfied with the chances for advancement in their current position. These same patterns hold among older workers.

## High Pay vs. Job Security

All else being equal, if asked to choose between a job with higher pay or better job security, most employed adults would pick job security. Among younger workers, 56% say they would prefer job security over higher pay (41%). Older workers prefer better job security over higher pay by an even greater margin (59% to 34%).

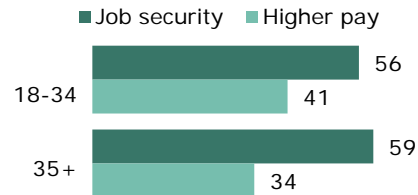
The youngest workers (ages 18 to 24) are about evenly split between a preference for higher pay (51%) and better job security (48%). This is a marked change from 2009, when this group's preferences mirrored those of older workers with 61% preferring better job security over higher pay (36%).

Among workers 25 and older, the balance of opinion leans to better job security, with a sizable minority saying they would opt for higher pay.

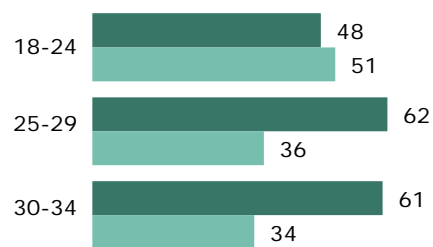
This balance of opinion holds among both younger workers of both genders and for those with either a college degree or who are enrolled in school. Younger workers (18 to 34) with no college degree and who are not currently enrolled tend to be more evenly divided between a preference for higher pay (46%) and a preference for better job security (49%).

## Most Prefer Job Security over Higher Pay

*Among those employed*



*Younger workers*

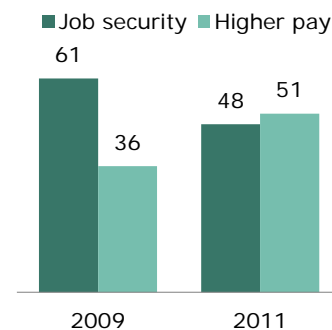


Notes: Based on all employed adults, n=1,231. "Both equally" and "Don't know/Refused" responses not shown.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q13

## Increased Preference for Money over Job Security among the Youngest Workers

*% of 18- to 24-year-olds who are employed*



Notes: Based on employed adults ages 18-24, for 2011 n=213. "Both equally" and "Don't know/Refused" responses not shown. Data from 2009 are from a survey conducted by Pew Research Center's Social & Demographic Trends project, Jul. 20-Aug. 2, 2009.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q13

## How's the Pay?

Workers' assessments of their current salary levels are split, with 52% of all workers saying they get paid enough and 46% saying they do not get paid enough, considering the kind and amount of work they do. Younger and older workers hold similar assessments of their compensation levels.

Compared with a 1997 survey conducted on behalf of Wisconsin public television, non-self-employed workers today are more likely to say they are being paid enough, up 11 points for workers 35 and older and up 10 points for workers ages 18 to 34.

Younger men and women are about equally likely to consider their current pay enough. This is a marked contrast to the pattern among older workers. Men ages 35 and older are more likely than women in this age group to say their current pay is enough (59% of male and 46% of female workers do so).

Younger workers in part-time positions (59%) are more likely than those in full-time positions (47%) to consider their wages enough.

Younger workers who think of their current position as a career are more likely to say they are paid enough; 60% among this group do so, compared with 51% among those who see their position as a steppingstone and 44% who consider it just a job.

## Current Pay, by Age

% of employed saying they are paid enough

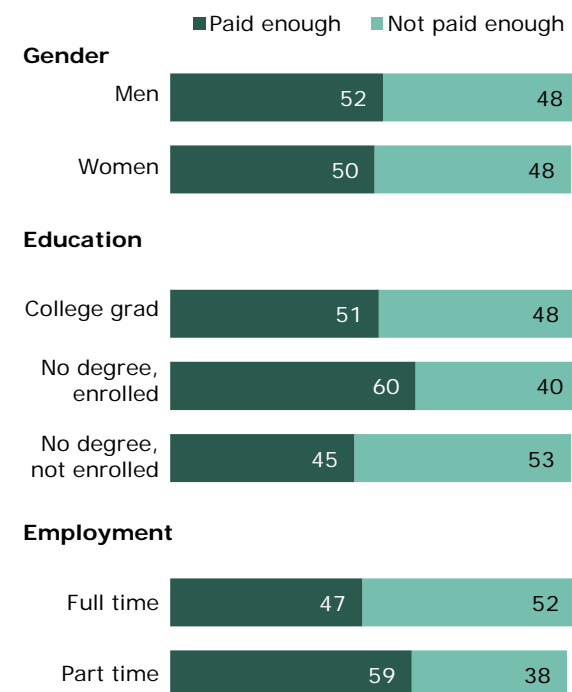


Notes: Based on all employed adults, n=1,231.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q23

## Views on Current Pay among Younger Workers

Among those 18 to 34 years old who are employed



Notes: Based on employed adults ages 18-34, n=550. "Don't know/Refused" responses not shown.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q23

Education is related to views of compensation. Among younger workers, those currently enrolled in school who do not yet have a degree are more likely to consider their pay enough (60%); about half (51%) of college graduates say the same, as do 45% of those without a college degree and not currently enrolled in school.

### The Tools to Get Ahead

The Pew Research survey asked for an assessment of whether respondents currently have the necessary training and education to advance in their job or career. About half (52%) of younger workers, ages 18 to 34, say they need more education and training to get ahead in their job or career, and 46% say they have what they need to advance now.

As expected, older workers are more likely to say they already have the training they need. Two-thirds (66%) of workers 35 and older report having the necessary training and education to advance now, and about three-in-ten (32%) say they need more education and training to advance.

These self-assessments are roughly the same as when last asked in 2006 for both younger and older workers, although the gap between young and old has widened somewhat.

Self-assessments of readiness to get ahead tend to vary by age. About four-in-ten (40%) of the youngest workers say they have what they need to advance, as do 44% of those of those 25 to 29 years old. A majority of those (56%) 30 to 34 years old say the same.

### Tools to Advance, by Age

*% of employed saying they have the education and training needed to get ahead*



*Among those ages 18-34 ...*

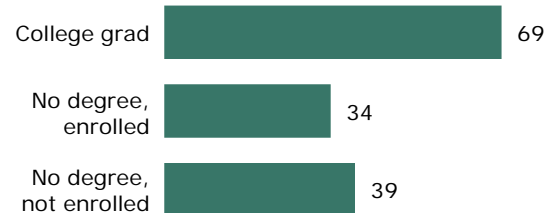
#### Age



#### Gender



#### Education



Notes: Based on employed adults, n=1,231 for all, n=550 for 18- to 34-year-olds.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q21

Men and women ages 18 to 34 are about equally likely to say they have the education they need to get ahead.

College graduates are much more likely than those with less education to report having the necessary training and education to get ahead in their jobs. About seven-in-ten (69%) younger workers with college degrees report having the necessary training to get ahead, while 31% say they need more. By contrast, a majority of younger workers without a college degree say they need more education and training.

### Optimism for Future Job Searches

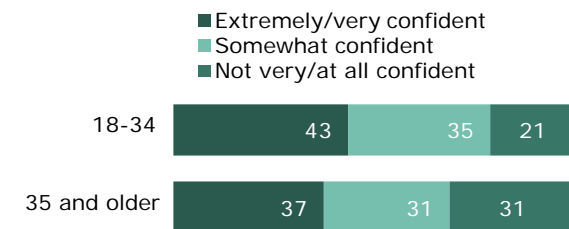
Workers appear largely optimistic about their own abilities to find another job if the need arises, regardless of age. Among those 18 to 34 years old, about four-in-ten (43%) are extremely or very confident they could find another job as good as or better than their current position, 35% are somewhat confident and about two-in-ten (21%) are not very or not at all confident they could find another job at the same level.

Older workers, ages 35 years and older, also tend to be confident in their ability to find another job. All told, this group is a bit less likely than younger workers to say they are at least somewhat confident in their abilities to find a job at the same level or better.

Younger men and women are about equally confident in their ability to find new work, if needed. Those in part-time jobs are more likely than those in full-time positions to be at least somewhat confident they could find another position.

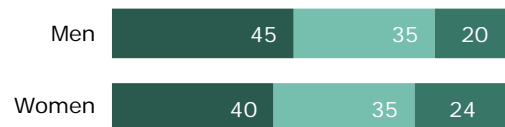
### Confidence in Finding Another Job

*Among those employed*

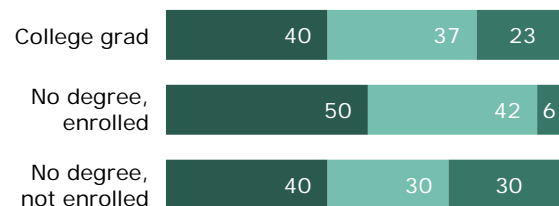


*Among those ages 18-34 ...*

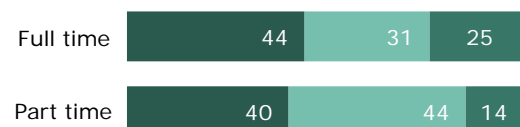
#### Gender



#### Education



#### Employment



Notes: Based on employed adults, n=1,231 for all, n=550 for 18- to 34-year-olds. "Don't know/Refused" responses not shown.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q25

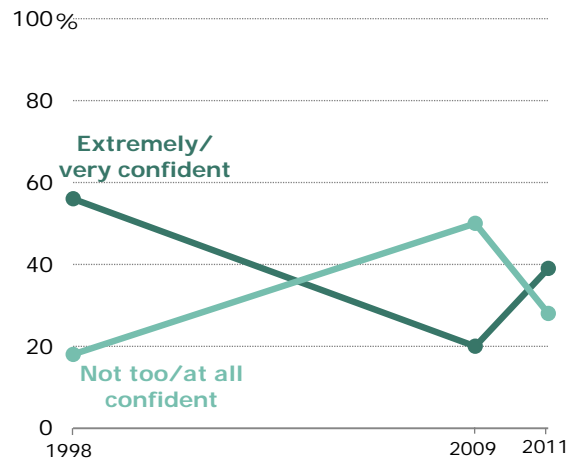
Among those without a college degree, younger workers currently enrolled in school are more likely than other younger workers to be at least somewhat confident in their ability to find a new position if needed.

Confidence in being able to find another job at an equal or better level tends to vary with the broader economic climate. A Rutgers University/ University of Connecticut poll conducted before the economic bust of the late 1990s found both younger and older workers more confident in their ability to find work compared with today, while a survey conducted in 2009 showed a populace considerably less confident than today.

More than six-in-ten workers 18 to 34 years old were very or extremely confident in their ability to find new work in 1998; a quarter (25%) expressed the same level of confidence in 2009. Confidence has partially rebounded today, with 43% of younger workers saying they are very or extremely confident that they could find another job.

## Workers Less Confident They Could Find Another Job

*Among those employed, % saying they are ... they could find another job if they lost/left current one*



Notes: Based on all employed adults, n=1,231 for 2011. "Somewhat confident" and "Don't know/Refused" responses not shown. Data for 2009 are from a survey conducted by Rutgers Univ.; 1998 data are from a Rutgers/Univ. of Connecticut survey.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q25

## Confidence over Time

*% of 18- to 34-year-olds who are employed*

	1998	2009	2011
	%	%	%
Extremely/very confident	65	25	43
Somewhat confident	25	41	35
Not very/not at all confident	9	34	21
DK/Ref	*	0	1
	100	100	100

Notes: Based on employed adults ages 18-34, n=550 for 2011. The asterisk (\*) is a percentage greater than 0 and less than 0.5%. Data for 2009 are from a survey conducted by Rutgers Univ.; 1998 data are from a Rutgers/Univ. of Connecticut survey.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q25

## Is It a Career ... or Just a Job?

Younger workers have a range of outlooks when it comes to their current employment situation. About four-in-ten (39%) younger workers (ages 18 to 34) say their current position is “just a job,” while three-in-ten call it a career and an equal share call it a “steppingstone to a career.” Among workers ages 35 and older, a similar portion say their current position is just a job (33%), and as would be expected among more established workers, more say their position is a career (52%), with 12% saying their current position is a steppingstone to a career.

The pattern of responses shows a clear progression with the youngest workers, ages 18 to 24, being the least likely to say they are working in a career position (just 11% do so) and most likely to say their current position is just a job to get by (52%). Those ages 30 to 34 have an orientation toward their current position that is broadly similar to that among older workers; about half of this group (49%) says they are working in a career, 18% says their position is a steppingstone to a career and 33% say it is just a job to get by.

### Are You in a Job ... or a Career?

*Among those employed*

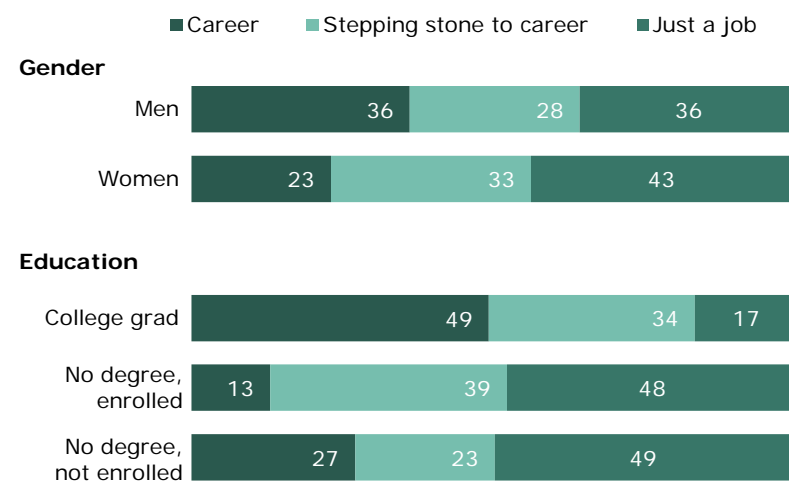
	Career	Stepping-stone to career	Just a job	DK/Ref
	%	%	%	%
18-34	30	30	39	*=100
18-24	11	37	52	1=100
25-29	34	36	30	0=100
30-34	49	18	33	*=100
35+	52	12	33	3=100

Note: Based on all employed adults, n=1,231. The asterisk (\*) is a percentage greater than 0 and less than 0.5%.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q12

### Are You in a Job ... or a Career?

*Among those 18 to 34 years old who are employed*



Notes: Based on employed adults ages 18-34, n=550. “Don’t know/Refused” responses not shown.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q12



Younger workers, ages 18 to 34, were about equally likely to call their current job a career in 2010 as they do today. However, workers ages 35 and older today are less likely to say their current position is a career, down from 60% in January 2010 to 52% today with a nearly equal rise in the percent calling their position just a job to get by (33% today, up from 27% in 2010).

Younger men are more likely than younger women to see their job as a career position. Upwards of a third of younger men (36%) say their position is a career, compared with 23% among women 18 to 34 years old. This pattern holds among older workers as well.

College education is also strongly associated with a career orientation among both younger and older workers. About half (49%) of those ages 18 to 34 with a college degree say their current position is a career, 34% call it a steppingstone and 17% say it is just a job. This pattern is reversed among those 18 to 34 with no college degree (and who are not currently enrolled in school); 49% say their position is just a job, 27% say it is a career and 23% call it a steppingstone. Younger workers who are currently enrolled in school, but with no college degree, are particularly likely to say their current job is a steppingstone (39% say this), 48% say it is just a job and 13% call it a career.

## APPENDIX 1: SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Results for the survey are based on telephone interviews conducted December 6-19, 2011 among a national sample of 2,048 adults 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States (a total of 769 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 1,279 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 633 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers at Princeton Data Source under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International (PSRAI). Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial (RDD) samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. The landline RDD sample was drawn using traditional list-assisted methods where telephone numbers were drawn with equal probabilities from all active blocks in the continental U.S. The cell sample was drawn through a systematic sampling from dedicated wireless 100-blocks and shared service 100-blocks with no directory-listed landline numbers. Both the landline and cell RDD samples were disproportionately stratified by county based on estimated incidences of African-American and Hispanic respondents. Additional interviewers were obtained with 18-34 year-olds by re-contacting landline and cell phone respondents ages 18-34 from recent surveys conducted by PSRAI.

Number of Interviews Conducted by Sample Source			
	New RDD All Adults	Callback 18-34	Total
Landline	652	117	769
Cellular	<u>1,050</u>	<u>229</u>	<u>1,279</u>
Total	1,702	346	2,048

Both the landline and cell samples were released for interviewing in replicates, which are small random samples of each larger sample. Using replicates to control the release of telephone numbers ensures that the complete call procedures are followed for all numbers dialed. As many as 7 attempts were made to contact every sampled telephone number. The calls are staggered over times of day and days of the week (including at least one daytime call) to maximize the chances of making contact with a potential respondent. An effort is made to recontact most interview breakoffs and refusals to attempt to convert them to completed interviews.

Respondents in the landline sample were selected by randomly asking for the youngest adult male or female who is now at home. Interviews in the cell sample were conducted with the person who answered the phone, if that person was an adult 18 years of age or older. The additional interviews with 18- to 34-year-olds from the cell sample were administered an age

screeners; those who were in the target age range completed the interview. For the landline callback sample, interviewers asked to speak with the person based on age and gender who participated in an earlier survey. For the cellular callback sample, interviews were conducted with the person who answered the phone once it was confirmed that they were in the target age range.

Weighting is generally used in survey analysis to adjust for effects of sample design and to compensate for patterns of nonresponse that might bias results. The weighting was accomplished in multiple stages to account for the different sample frames as well as the oversampling of 18-34 year-olds. Weighting also balances sample demographic distributions to match known population parameters.

In the second stage of weighting, the combined sample was weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin, and region to parameters from the Current Population Survey's March 2010 Annual Social and Economic Supplement. The population density parameter is county based and was derived from the Decennial Census. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status and relative usage of landline and cell phones (for those with both), based on extrapolations from the 2010 National Health Interview Survey.

The survey's margin of error is the largest 95% confidence interval for any estimated proportion based on the total sample – the one around 50%. For example, the margin of error for the entire sample is plus or minus 2.9 percentage points. This means that in 95 out of every 100 samples drawn using the same methods, estimated proportions based on the entire sample will be no more than 2.9 percentage points away from their true values in the population. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. The following table shows the sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

Group	Sample Size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	2,048	2.9 percentage points
18-34 year-olds	808	4.4 percentage points
35 and older	1,211	3.6 percentage points

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

## APPENDIX 2: TOPLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

PEW SOCIAL & DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS  
DECEMBER 2011 YOUTH AND ECONOMY SURVEY  
TOPLINE OF SELECTED QUESTIONS  
DECEMBER 6-DECEMBER 19, 2011  
TOTAL N=2,048, AGES 18-34 N=808

**NOTE: ALL NUMBERS ARE PERCENTAGES. THE PERCENTAGES GREATER THAN ZERO BUT LESS THAN 0.5 % ARE REPLACED BY AN ASTERISK (\*). COLUMNS/ROWS MAY NOT TOTAL 100% DUE TO ROUNDING. UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED, ALL TRENDS REFERENCE SURVEYS FROM SOCIAL & DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS AND THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS. PERCENTAGES FOR SUB-GROUPS ARE NOT REPORTED WHEN N IS LESS THAN 100.**

**ASK ALL:**

Q.1 Generally, how would you say things are these days in your life -- would you say that you are very happy, pretty happy, or not too happy?

<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>	
31	33	30	Very happy
50	55	48	Pretty happy
15	10	18	Not too happy
3	2	4	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)
	(n=808)	(n=1,211)	

**Trends:** <sup>25</sup>

	<u>Very happy</u>	<u>Pretty happy</u>	<u>Not too happy</u>	<u>DK/Refused (VOL.)</u>
Dec 2011	31	50	15	3
Sep 2011	30	47	20	3
Mar 2011	30	52	16	2
Jan 2010	28	54	16	2
Jul 2009	34	49	15	3
Apr 2009	29	52	16	4
Feb 2009	32	49	15	4
Oct 2008	29	51	17	3
Jun 2008	35	48	14	3
Sep 2006	36	51	12	1
Oct 2005	34	50	15	1
Late Mar 2003	29	51	16	4
Feb 2003	29	51	17	3
Sep 1996	34	53	11	2

<sup>25</sup> Unless otherwise noted, trends are based on total sample.

**ASK ALL:**

Q.2 Next, please tell me whether you are satisfied or dissatisfied, on the whole, with the following aspects of your life:  
(First/Next) [READ AND RANDOMIZE] [IF NECESSARY: Are you satisfied or dissatisfied?]

**REQUIRED PROBE:** Would you say you are VERY (dis)satisfied or SOMEWHAT (dis)satisfied?

## a. Your family life

<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>		<u>Sep</u> <u>2011</u>	<u>Mar</u> <u>2011</u>	<u>Oct</u> <u>2010</u>	<u>Jun</u> <u>2008</u>	<u>Oct</u> <u>2005</u>	<u>Jan</u> <u>1999</u>	<u>Nov</u> <u>1996</u>
69	71	69	Very satisfied	67	72	75	69	72	71	69
20	21	20	Somewhat satisfied	22	19	19	22	19	20	21
5	4	6	Somewhat dissatisfied	5	4	4	4	4	4	6
3	3	3	Very dissatisfied	4	3	2	2	3	3	3
*	*	*	Does not apply (VOL.)	n/a	*	*	1	1	n/a	n/a
2	2	2	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	3	2	1	2	1	2	1

## b. Your personal financial situation

<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>		<u>Sep</u> <u>2011</u>	<u>Mar</u> <u>2011</u>	<u>Oct</u> <u>2010</u>	<u>Feb</u> <u>2009</u> <sup>26</sup>
27	20	29	Very satisfied	25	28	29	23
38	43	35	Somewhat satisfied	35	39	40	43
16	20	15	Somewhat dissatisfied	19	17	14	18
17	16	18	Very dissatisfied	18	14	14	13
*	*	*	Does not apply (VOL.)	n/a	*	*	*
2	1	2	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	2	2	2	3

## c. Your present housing situation

<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>		<u>Mar</u> <u>2011</u>	<u>Feb</u> <u>2009</u> <sup>27</sup>	<u>Oct</u> <u>2005</u>	<u>Jan</u> <u>1999</u>	<u>Nov</u> <u>1996</u>
57	47	62	Very satisfied	56	56	63	61	56
28	35	25	Somewhat satisfied	29	30	25	28	31
8	11	6	Somewhat dissatisfied	7	8	6	6	7
6	6	6	Very dissatisfied	5	4	5	4	5
0	0	0	Does not apply (VOL.)	*	*	*	n/a	n/a
1	*	1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	2	2	1	1	1

## d. Your education

<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>		<u>Mar</u> <u>2011</u>
52	46	54	Very satisfied	50
30	33	28	Somewhat satisfied	32
12	14	11	Somewhat dissatisfied	10
5	6	4	Very dissatisfied	5
*	*	*	Does not apply (VOL.)	1
2	1	3	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	2

<sup>26</sup> In Feb. 2009, the question read "Please tell me whether, on the whole, you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied with the following aspects of your life..."

<sup>27</sup> In 2009 and earlier, the item was "your housing situation."

**ASK ALL:**

Q.3 Compared to your parents when they were the age you are now, do you think your own standard of living now is much better, somewhat better, about the same, somewhat worse, or much worse than theirs was?

<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>	
36	34	38	Much better
24	29	21	Somewhat better
23	23	22	About the same
10	8	10	Somewhat worse
5	5	6	Much worse
2	1	3	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

**Trends:**

	<u>Much better</u>	<u>Somewhat better</u>	<u>About the same</u>	<u>Somewhat worse</u>	<u>Much worse</u>	<u>DK/Ref (VOL.)</u>
Dec 2011	36	24	23	10	5	2
Mar 2011	35	26	23	9	4	3
May 2010	31	26	23	11	6	3
Jan 2008	38	27	19	9	5	2
GSS 2010	29	29	25	12	4	1
GSS 2008	31	31	21	11	5	1
GSS 2006	35	31	21	9	3	1
GSS 2004	39	31	18	8	3	1
GSS 2002	35	33	19	10	2	1
GSS 2000	35	31	21	9	3	2
GSS 1998	33	32	21	10	3	1
GSS 1996	33	29	21	12	3	2
GSS 1994	32	32	21	10	3	2

**ASK ALL:**

Q.4 When your children are at the age you are now, do you think their standard of living will be much better, somewhat better, about the same, somewhat worse, or much worse than yours is now?

<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>	
28	36	24	Much better
20	24	18	Somewhat better
19	21	18	About the same
13	6	16	Somewhat worse
10	8	11	Much worse
6	3	7	No children (VOL.)
5	2	6	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

**Trends:**

	<u>Much better</u>	<u>Somewhat better</u>	<u>About the same</u>	<u>Somewhat worse</u>	<u>Much worse</u>	<u>No children (VOL.)</u>	<u>DK/Ref (VOL.)</u>
Dec 2011	28	20	19	13	10	6	5
Mar 2011	26	22	19	12	9	6	5
May 2010	24	21	19	16	10	6	4
Jan 2008	26	23	20	14	7	5	5
GSS 2010	24	28	18	13	5	8	3
GSS 2008	27	26	18	13	5	9	3
GSS 2006	28	29	18	11	3	10	2
GSS 2004	23	30	22	11	3	9	2
GSS 2002	26	35	18	8	2	9	2
GSS 2000	28	31	16	7	3	11	4
GSS 1998	22	33	20	9	3	9	4
GSS 1996	20	27	20	17	5	7	4
GSS 1994	16	29	22	15	5	9	4

**ASK ALL:**

Q.5 When you think about YOUR prospects for the future, do you tend to be more optimistic that you will be able to achieve your goals, do you tend to be more worried that you will face many difficulties that might prevent you from achieving your goals, or have you already reached the goals you set for yourself?

<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>		<i>NBC/Wall Street Journal</i> <u>Dec 1997</u>
46	64	37	More optimistic	54
26	25	26	More worried	22
26	9	33	Already reached goals	18
1	1	1	Some of both (VOL.)	4
2	1	3	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	2

**ASK ALL:**

Q.7 Here are some goals that people value in their lives. Some people say these things are very important to them. Others say they are not so important. Please tell me how important each is to you personally. First **[INSERT FIRST ITEM (ITEM e. SHOULD NOT COME FIRST); RANDOMIZE]**, is that one of the most important things in your life, very important but not the most, somewhat important, or not important? How about **[INSERT NEXT ITEM]? [REPEAT AS NECESSARY “is that one of the most important things in your life, very important but not the most, somewhat important, or not important?”]**

**ASK FORM 1 ONLY [n=992]:**

a.F1 Being successful in a high-paying career or profession

				<i>Washington Post / Kaiser / Harvard</i>	
<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>		<u>Jan 2010</u>	<u>Aug 1997</u>
10	15	7	One of the most important things	9	9
40	47	37	Very important but not the most	36	32
31	29	31	Somewhat important	34	39
18	9	23	Not important	21	20
1	*	2	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	1	*
(n=384)		(n=589)			

**ASK FORM 2 ONLY [n=1,056]:**

b.F2 Having a job or career that benefits society

<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>	
17	22	14	One of the most important things
50	49	51	Very important but not the most
20	22	18	Somewhat important
11	6	13	Not important
3	*	4	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)
(n=424)		(n=622)	

c. Having a successful marriage

				<i>Washington Post / Kaiser / Harvard</i>	
<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>		<u>Jan 2010</u>	<u>Aug 1997</u>
36	34	37	One of the most important things	34	31
48	51	46	Very important but not the most	51	55
8	9	8	Somewhat important	8	7
7	7	7	Not important	6	7
1	*	2	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	2	1

d. Being a good parent

				<i>Washington Post / Kaiser / Harvard</i>	
<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>		<u>Jan 2010</u>	<u>Aug 1997</u>
53	54	53	One of the most important things	50	41
39	39	40	Very important but not the most	44	54
2	2	2	Somewhat important	2	2
3	5	3	Not important	3	2
2	1	3	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	1	1



## Q.7 CONTINUED ...

e. Becoming famous

<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>		<u>Jan 2010</u>
1	1	1	One of the most important things	1
4	5	4	Very important but not the most	3
7	9	6	Somewhat important	9
87	85	88	Not important	87
1	*	1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	*

f. Owning your own home

<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>		<u>Jan 2010</u>
20	18	22	One of the most important things	20
54	55	54	Very important but not the most	53
19	21	18	Somewhat important	20
6	6	5	Not important	7
1	*	1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	1

## ASK ALL:

Q.9 All things considered, which age group do you think is having a tougher time in today's economy... [READ AND RANDOMIZE]?

<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>	
24	19	26	Older adults
41	49	38	Young adults
29	28	30	Middle-aged adults
4	4	5	All are having an equally rough time (VOL.)
1	1	2	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

**ASK ALL:**

- Q.10 Thinking about young adults today compared to their parents' generation, do you think **[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE]** is **[FORM 1: harder for today's young adults, easier/FORM 2: easier for today's adults, harder]** or is it about the same as it was for their parents' generation? Still thinking about young adults today compared to their parents' generation, is **[INSERT NEXT ITEM]** **[FORM 1: harder for today's young adults, easier/FORM 2: easier for today's adults, harder]** or is it about the same as it was for their parents' generation? How about **[INSERT NEXT ITEM]**, **[IF NECESSARY: is this (FORM 1: harder for today's young adults, easier/FORM 2: easier for today's adults, harder) or is it about the same as it was for their parents' generation?]**

**INTERVIEWER NOTE: IF RESPONDENT ASKS WHAT AGE "YOUNG ADULTS" ARE, IT'S OKAY TO SAY "Adults in their twenties or early thirties."**

## a. Getting into college

<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>	
41	36	43	Harder today
33	38	30	Easier today
25	24	25	About the same as it was
2	2	2	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

## b. Buying a home

<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>	
69	69	69	Harder today
15	14	15	Easier today
15	15	14	About the same as it was
2	1	2	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

## c. Paying for college

<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>	
71	66	74	Harder today
12	18	9	Easier today
15	15	15	About the same as it was
1	1	2	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

## d. Finding a job

<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>	
82	79	84	Harder today
5	7	4	Easier today
12	14	11	About the same as it was
1	1	1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

## e. Saving for the future

<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>	
75	72	76	Harder today
7	8	6	Easier today
18	19	17	About the same as it was
1	*	1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

## Q.10 CONTINUED ...

f. Staying in touch with friends and family

<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>	
18	12	20	Harder today
62	72	57	Easier today
19	15	21	About the same as it was
1	*	1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

g. Finding a spouse or partner

<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>	
37	32	38	Harder today
20	25	17	Easier today
40	42	39	About the same as it was
4	1	6	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

**ASK ALL:**

On a different subject...

E1 Are you currently retired?

<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>	
26	3	37	Retired (NET)
22	1	32	Yes
3	2	4	Yes, semi-retired or "still do some type of work" (VOL.)
73	97	61	No
2	*	2	Disabled (VOL.)
*	*	*	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

**ASK ALL:**

E2 Are you now enrolled in school, either full or part-time, or not?

<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>	
15	38	4	Enrolled
10	26	2	Full time
6	12	3	Part time
85	62	95	Not enrolled
*	*	*	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

**ASK ALL:**

E3 (IF E1=1,2 & E2=3,9 : Some people who have retired do some type of work for pay.../IF E2=1,2 & E1=3,9: Some students also do some type of work for pay/IF E1=4: Some people who are disabled do some type of work for pay... ) Are you now employed full-time, part-time or not employed?

<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>	
58	66	55	Employed
43	46	42	Full time
15	21	12	Part time
41	34	45	Not employed
*	*	1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

**ASK IF EMPLOYED (E3=1,2) [n=1,231]:**

E3c. Are you self-employed, or not? **[INTERVIEWER INSTRUCTION: IF R MENTIONS MORE THAN ONE JOB/EMPLOYER ASK ABOUT THEIR “main job”]**

<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>	
19	10	25	Yes, self-employed (includes independent contractor, freelance worker)
80	89	75	No, not self-employed
*	1	*	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>
	(n=550)	(n=663)	

**ASK IF EMPLOYED (E3=1,2) [N=1,231]:**

Q.11 How satisfied are you with your current job... **[READ]**?

<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>		<i>Gallup/CNN/USA Today</i> <u>June 1994</u>
36	31	40	Completely satisfied	39
49	53	47	Somewhat satisfied	47
10	11	9	Somewhat dissatisfied	11
5	5	4	Completely dissatisfied	3
1	1	*	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>	*
	(n=550)	(n=663)		

**ASK IF NOT EMPLOYED (E3=3) [n=806]:**

E4 Are you currently looking for work or not?

<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>		<u>Sep 2011</u>	<u>May 2010</u>	<u>Jul 2009</u>	<u>Feb 2009</u>
30	60	19	Yes, looking for work	33	22	24	27
70	40	81	No, not looking for work	67	78	76	72
*	0	*	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>	*	1	0	1
	(n=256)	(n=540)					

**ASK IF EMPLOYED (E3=1,2) [n=1,231]:**

Q.12 Do you think of your current job as a career, a stepping stone to a career, or do you think of it as just a job to get you by?

<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>		<u>Jan 2010</u>
44	30	52	A career	51
19	30	12	A stepping stone to a career	18
35	39	33	Just a job to get you by	29
2	*	3	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>	2
	(n=550)	(n=663)		

**ASK ALL:**

Q.13 All other things being equal, which would you prefer: A higher-paying job, or a job that offers better job security?  
**[INTERVIEWER NOTE: IF RESPONDENT SAYS THEY ARE RETIRED/DISABLED AND QUESTION DOES NOT APPLY, PROMPT WITH “Generally speaking, which do you think is more important?”]**

<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>		<u>Jul 2009</u>
32	39	29	High-paying job	32
62	58	65	Job security	60
2	2	3	Both equally <b>(VOL.)</b>	5
3	2	4	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>	4

**ASK IF EMPLOYED (E3=1,2) [n=1,231]:**

Q.14 Do you now earn enough money to lead the kind of life you want, or not?

**ASK IF NO (Q.14=2)**

Q.15 Do you think you will be able to earn enough money in the future to lead the kind of life you want, or not?

<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>	
46	38	51	Yes
53	62	48	No (NET)
35	55	23	<i>Yes, will in future</i>
16	6	23	<i>No, will not in future</i>
2	*	2	<i>Don't know/Refused (VOL.)</i>
1	1	1	<i>Don't know/Refused (VOL.)</i>
	(n=550)	(n=663)	

**Trends:**

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No (NET)</u>	<u><i>Yes, will in future</i></u>	<u><i>No, will not in future</i></u>	<u><i>DK/Ref (VOL.)</i></u>	<u><i>DK/Ref (VOL.)</i></u>
Dec 2011	46	53	35	16	2	1
Jan 2010	45	55	37	16	2	1
Sep 2007	46	53	31	19	3	1
Oct 2006	46	53	32	18	3	1
Sep 2006	49	50	33	15	2	1
Jan 2006	46	53	28	23	2	1
May 2005	40	59	35	22	2	1
May 2004	51	48	25	19	4	1
Feb 2004	53	46	26	19	1	1
Jun 2002	43	56	30	23	3	1
Jan 2001	43	56	33	21	2	1
Sep 1999	42	58	33	23	2	*
Jul 1999	39	60	38	19	3	1
Aug 1998	43	57	36	20	1	*
Nov 1997	41	59	33	24	2	*
May 1997	46	54	34	18	2	*
May 1996	44	56	34	20	2	*
Feb 1995	41	58	35	20	3	1
Jul 1994	40	60	34	24	2	*
Mar 1994	44	56	33	20	3	*
<i>U.S. News &amp; W.</i>	39	61	34	22	5	*
<i>Report/PSRA</i>						
Jan 1992						

**ASK IF NOT EMPLOYED OR DK/REF (E3=3,9) [n=817]:**

Q.16 Do you now have enough income to lead the kind of life you want, or not?

**ASK IF NO (Q.16=2)**

Q.17 Do you think you will have enough income in the future to lead the kind of life you want, or not?

<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>	
41	19	49	Yes
56	80	48	No (NET)
24	60	10	Yes, will in future
28	14	33	No, will not in future
4	5	4	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)
2	*	3	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)
	(n=258)	(n=548)	

**Trends:**

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No (NET)</u>	<u>Yes, will in future</u>	<u>No, will not in future</u>	<u>DK/Ref (VOL.)</u>	<u>DK/Ref (VOL.)</u>
Dec 2011	41	56	24	28	4	2
Jan 2010	42	57	31	22	4	1
Sep 2007	47	50	22	25	3	3
Oct 2006	48	49	20	23	6	3
Sep 2006	53	44	22	18	4	2
Jan 2006	45	52	19	29	4	3
May 2004	50	47	18	25	4	3
Feb 2004	48	50	21	23	6	2

**ASK IF EMPLOYED (E3=1,2) [n=1,231]:**

Q.18 You mentioned earlier that you work (IF E3=1: full time; IF E3=2: part-time). Are you currently looking for a different job, or not?

<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>	
21	29	17	Yes, looking for a different job
78	71	82	No, not looking for a different job
1	*	1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)
	(n=550)	(n=663)	

**NO QUESTIONS 19, 20****ASK IF EMPLOYED (E3=1,2) [n=1,231]:**

Q.21 In general, do you feel you have the education and training necessary to get ahead in your job or career, OR do you need more education and training?

<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>		<u>June 2006</u>
59	46	66	Have necessary education and training	57
40	52	32	Need more	42
2	1	2	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	1
	(n=550)	(n=663)		

**ASK IF NOT RETIRED (E1=2-9) AND NOT EMPLOYED (E3=3) [n=438]:**

Q.22 In general, do you feel you have the education and training necessary to get the kind of job you want, or do you need more education and training?

<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>	
35	27	41	Have necessary education and training
63	72	55	Need more
2	*	3	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)
	(n=252)	(n=183)	

**ASK IF EMPLOYED (E3=1,2) [n=1,231]:**

Q.23 Considering the kind of work you do and how much you get done, do you think you get paid enough, or don't get paid enough?

<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>		<u>Not self-employed</u>	
				<i>Wisc. Public</i>	<i>TV/PSRA</i>
				<u>Dec 2011</u>	<u>June 1997</u>
52	51	53	Paid enough	51	42
46	48	45	Not paid enough	47	57
2	1	2	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	1	1
	(n=550)	(n=663)		(n=998)	(n=737)

**ASK IF EMPLOYED (E3=1,2) [n=1,231]:**

Q.24 Generally speaking, how satisfied are you with the chances for advancement at your current job: are you **[READ]**

<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>		<u>Employed full time</u>	
				<i>USA Today</i>	<i>USA Today</i>
				<u>Dec 2011</u>	<u>Dec 1986<sup>28</sup></u>
30	24	33	Very satisfied	32	35
38	45	34	Somewhat satisfied	38	31
16	17	15	Somewhat dissatisfied	17	16
10	10	9	Very dissatisfied	8	15
3	2	3	Not interested in advancing in current job (VOL.)	3	n/a
3	1	5	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	3	4
	(n=550)	(n=663)		(n=904)	(n=574)

**ASK IF EMPLOYED (E3=1,2) [n=1,231]:**

Q.25 How confident are you that if you lost or wanted to leave your current job, you could find another job as good or better? Are you **[READ]**

<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>		<i>Rutgers</i>	<i>Rutgers / UConn</i>
				<u>Nov 2009</u>	<u>Aug 1998</u>
15	16	14	Extremely confident	7	28
24	27	23	Very confident	13	28
32	35	31	Somewhat confident	29	25
16	12	18	Not very confident	28	11
12	10	13	Not confident at all	22	7
1	1	2	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	1	1
	(n=550)	(n=663)		(n=538)	(n=940)

<sup>28</sup> Trend from *USA Today* for Dec. 1986 includes those working full time, on a leave of absence or on sabbatical. Because the full dataset was not available, the sample size is derived by computing the 71.7% of the full sample who were asked this question.

**ASK ALL:**

On another subject...

AGE What is your age?

<u>Total</u>	
32	18-34
22	35-49
28	50-64
17	65+
1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

**ASK ALL:**

MARITAL

Are you currently married, living with a partner, divorced, separated, widowed, or have you never been married? **(IF R SAYS "SINGLE," PROBE TO DETERMINE WHICH CATEGORY IS APPROPRIATE)**

<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>	
50	28	60	Married
7	14	4	Living with a partner
9	3	11	Divorced
3	2	3	Separated
8	*	12	Widowed
23	52	9	Never been married
1	1	1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

**ASK ALL:**

KIDSA Do you have any children under age 18? **IF RESPONDENT VOL.UNTEERS THAT THEY HAVE STEPCHILDREN, ASK:** Do you consider yourself **(IF MORE THAN ONE: their/IF ONE: his or her)** parent or guardian, or not? **IF YES, CODE '1'**

<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>	
32	38	29	Yes
68	62	71	No
*	*	0	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

**ASK IF KIDS UNDER 18 (KIDSA=1) [n=627]:**

KIDSB Are any of those children age 16 or younger?

<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>	
92	96	89	Yes
8	4	10	No
*	0	1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)
	(n=279)	(n=342)	



**ASK ALL:**

KIDSC Do you have any adult children, age 18 or older? **IF RESPONDENT VOL.UNTEERS THAT THEY HAVE STEPCHILDREN, ASK:** Do you consider yourself (**IF MORE THAN ONE:** their/**IF ONE:** his or her) parent or guardian, or not? **IF YES, CODE '1'**

<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>	
46	1	68	Yes
54	99	32	No
*	*	0	Don't know/Refused ( <b>VOL.</b> )

**ASK IF KIDSC=1 [n=856]:**

AKID How many of your children are ages 18 or older?

<u>Total</u>	
20	1
39	2
21	3
19	4+
*	Don't know/Refused ( <b>VOL.</b> )

**ASK ALL:**

Q.28 At about what age do you think children today should HAVE to be financially independent from their parents? Would you say by... **[READ IN ORDER]**?

<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>		<u>Parents with children 16 or younger</u>	
				<u>Dec 2011</u>	<u>April 1993</u>
				<i>Newsweek/PSRA</i>	
15	23	12	Age 18	21	28
40	43	38	Age 22	46	52
34	25	38	Age 25	26	15
5	3	7	Age 30	3	2
3	4	3	Never	2	2
*	*	*	Over 30 ( <b>VOL.</b> )	0	0
3	2	3	Don't know/Refused ( <b>VOL.</b> )	2	2
				(n=577)	(n=752)

**ASK ALL:**

OWNRENT Do you own or rent your home **[IF AGE < 35:** or do you live in a dorm or live with your parents]?

<u>Total</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35+</u>	
56	23	72	Own
30	42	24	Rent
2	6	0	Live in a dorm
8	24	1	Live with parents
4	5	3	Other arrangement ( <b>VOL.</b> )
*	0	*	Don't know/Refused ( <b>VOL.</b> )

**ASK ONLY THOSE AGES 18-34 (n=808):**

Q.29 For each of the following, please tell me whether or not it is something that has happened to you over the past few years because of economic conditions. Have you **[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE]**?

a. Moved back in with your parents after living on your own

<u>18-34</u>		May 2010 <sup>29</sup>
24	Yes	<u>18-34</u> 22
75	No	76
1	Does not apply ( <b>VOL.</b> )	2
0	Don't know/Refused ( <b>VOL.</b> )	*

(n=390)

b. Postponed getting married

<u>18-34</u>	
20	Yes
79	No
1	Does not apply ( <b>VOL.</b> )
*	Don't know/Refused ( <b>VOL.</b> )

c. Postponed having a baby

<u>18-34</u>	
22	Yes
77	No
*	Does not apply ( <b>VOL.</b> )
1	Don't know/Refused ( <b>VOL.</b> )

d. Gone back to school

<u>18-34</u>	
35	Yes
62	No
2	Does not apply ( <b>VOL.</b> )
*	Don't know/Refused ( <b>VOL.</b> )

e. Taken a job you didn't really want just to pay the bills

<u>18-34</u>	
49	Yes
51	No
0	Does not apply ( <b>VOL.</b> )
0	Don't know/Refused ( <b>VOL.</b> )

<sup>29</sup> In May 2010, the question asked if this was something that "has happened to you during the recession"

**Q.29 CONTINUED ...**

f. Taken an unpaid job to gain work experience

18-34

24 Yes

76 No

\* Does not apply **(VOL.)**

0 Don't know/Refused **(VOL.)**